

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XV

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AN ANNIVERSARY NUMBER OF "THE
SMART SET"

With its next issue THE SMART SET begins the sixth year of its existence. Months ago the publishers began planning to make this anniversary number one of special importance, and so setting the highest possible standard for the ensuing year. To this end arrangements were made for publishing in the next (March) number a novel by one of the most popular story-tellers in America,

"THE PRINCESS ELOPES," By Harold MacGrath.

Nearly every reader in the country knows Mr. MacGrath's other novels, "The Gray Cloak," "The Puppet Crown" and "The Man on the Box." The author considers this new story one of the very best he has ever written—and his readers everywhere are quite likely to agree with him.

This complete novel will be supplemented by a dozen or more remarkably strong short stories, some by favorite authors and some by writers hitherto unknown. Among them will be:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| A MAN UNLEARNED, - - - | By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd |
| THE TRANSFER OF THORNEYCROFT, By Wm. Hamilton Osborne | |
| ROBERT TWIGG, KNIGHT-ERRANT, - - - | By Kate Jordan |
| THE STALKING HORSE, - - - | By Van Tassel Sutphen |
| THE TWO O'LEANS, - - - | By Grace MacGowan Cooke |
| A VENIAL OFFENSE, - - - | By Norvell Harrison |
| THE TRANSIT OF A SOUL, - - | By Frances Aymar Mathews |

These stories, along with others equally good, the best verse ever published in a single number of a magazine, and a clever and timely essay by Maurice Francis Egan, will make the March SMART SET better even than its predecessors.

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THE EAVESDROPPERS

By Arthur Stringer

DURKIN waited, with the receiver at his ear. Once more the signal-bell shrilled and cluttered its curtly hurried warning. A vague yet nasal and half-impatient voice murmured brokenly out of somewhere to someone: "You're connected now—go ahead!"

Then came a grating rasp and drone, a metallic click or two, and out of the stillness there floated in to his waiting ear the space-filtered music of an anxious "Hello!"—flute-like, mellow, far-away.

It seemed to him there, under the stress of his passing mood, that an incorporeal presence had whispered the word to him. Suddenly, for the first time in his life, the miracle of it all came home to him, the mystery and magic of that tenuous instrument, which could guide and treasure and carry in to him through the night the very tone and timbre of that one familiar voice, flashing it a thousand miles through star-hung forest and hill and valley, threading it on through sleeping towns and turbulent cities, winging it through wind and water unerringly home to his waiting ear.

"Hello?" the anxious contralto was asking again.

"Hello?" cried Durkin, pent in the bald little speaking-closet, yet his face illuminated with a wonderful new alertness. "Hello! Is that you, Mame?"

A ripple of relieved laughter ebbed out of the wire.

"Oh, Jim!" sounded the far-away voice in his ear sighingly, "it seems so good!"

"Where are you?"

"In Chicago—at the Wellington office."

He chuckled a little, as though the accomplishment of the miracle, the annihilation of half a continent of space, was a matter of his own personal triumph.

"Here we're talking together, through a thousand miles of midnight!" he boasted to her.

"Yes, I know; but I wish it wasn't so far! Did you recognize my voice?"

"I'd know that voice in—in Hades!" he answered, with a sudden grim but inadequate earnestness. He had hoped to say something fitting and fine, but, as always seemed to happen to him in such moments, his imagination founders in the turbulence of his emotions.

"You may have to, some day, my poor Orpheus!" she was laughing back at him.

But the allusion was lost on Durkin, and he cut in with a curt, "What's happened?"

"I want to come home!" It must have been a good night for 'phoning, he felt, as he heard those five cogent words, and an inconsequential little glow suffused him. Not an ohm of their soft wistfulness, not a coulomb of their quiet significance, had leaked away through all their thousand miles of midnight travel. It almost seemed that he could feel the intimate warmth of her arms across the million-peopled cities that separated them; and he projected himself, in fancy, to the heart of the far-off turbulence where she stood. There, it seemed to him, she radiated warmth and color and meaning to the barren wastes of life, a

glowing and living ember in all the dead ashes of unconcern. And again it flashed through him, as the wistful cadence of her voice died down on the wire, that she was all that he had in life, and that with her thereafter he must rise or sink.

"I want to come home," she was repeating dolefully.

He laughed crisply.

"You've got to come, and come quick!"

"What was that?"

"I say risk it and come," he called back to her. "Something has happened!"

"Something happened! Not bad news, is it?"

"No—but it will open your eyes when you hear it!"

"Everything at my end has been done, you know."

"You mean that it came out all right?"

"Not quite all right, but I think it will do. Is it safe for me to tell you something?"

"Yes, anything in reason, I guess."

"Curry's men in New Orleans are working against him."

"Let me add something to that. Green and his men are trying to break Curry, and Curry all the time is laying a mine under every blessed one of them!" And Durkin gave vent to a triumphant chuckle deep down in his throat.

"Where did you find this out?" the unperturbed and far-away contralto was demanding.

"You could never guess."

"Talk faster, or this telephoning will break us," she warned him.

"Oh, I don't care—it's worth the money."

"Hello—hello! Oh, all right. Go on!"

"You heard about the fire in the terminal-room of the Postal Union? Well, some Dago with a torch got a little too careless in a P. U. conduit and set fire to a cable-splicer's pot of paraffin down on lower Broadway, not much more than a stone's throw from Wall Street itself. Then the flames

caught on the burlap and the insulation grease and stuff round the cables. There was the dickens to pay, and in about ten minutes they looked more like a cartload of old excelsior than the business wires of a few thousand offices!"

"Yes, go on!"

"Well, it stopped nine thousand telephones and put over two hundred stock-tickers out of business and cut off nearly five hundred of the Postal Union's wires and left all lower New York without even fire-alarm service. That's saying nothing of the out-of-town wires and the long-distance service! Did you get all that?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, there's a lot more to tell, but it will keep—say, till Thursday night. Listen: I think I can open your eyes when you get here," he said slowly and significantly.

"All right—even a Great Western wire might have ears, you know!" she warned him.

"Quite so—but how about your Savannah mix-up?"

"You saw the newspaper stories?"

"The *Herald* yesterday said the Secretary of Agriculture had demanded from the Savannah Cotton Exchange the name of the wire house that bulletin a Government crop report thirty minutes ahead of the official release."

"Yes; that's Dunlap & Co. They are frantic. They still declare there was no leak, and are fighting it out with the department at Washington. In the meantime, luckily for us, of course they're sending out press statements saying it was all a coincidence between their firm's private crop estimate and the actual Government report. I couldn't give you much of a margin of time to work on."

"That thirty minutes just gave me time to get in on the uptown quotations. I missed the lower office, of course."

"Hadn't we better hold this over?"

"Yes; I rather forgot—it'll wait until you get here."

"Then Thursday night, at eight, say, at the Grenoble!"

"No, no; make it nine forty-five—I don't get away until then."

"What would the Grenoble people say?"

"That's so—you'd better go to the Ralston. It's free and easy. Yes, the Ralston," he repeated. "The Ralston, at nine forty-five, Thursday. Good-bye!"

A moment later he could hear the frantic signal-bell again.

"Hello! Hello! What is it?"

"Hello, New York! Not through yet," said the tired and nasal voice of the operator.

"You forgot something!" It was the contralto voice this time, reproachful and wounded. Durkin laughed a little as he leaned closer to the mouth-piece of his transmitter.

"Good-bye, dearest!" he said.

"Good-bye, my beloved own!" answered the wire, across its thousand miles of star-strewn midnight.

Durkin hung up his receiver with a sigh, and stopped at the office to pay his bill. All that was worth knowing and having, all that life held, seemed withdrawn and engulfed in space. He felt grimly alone in a city out of which all reality had ebbed. It seemed to him that somewhere a half-heard lilt of music had suddenly ceased.

A spirit of restless loneliness took possession of him as he stepped out into the crowded solitudes of Broadway. His thoughts ran back to the day that he had first met Mabel Candler, when, discharged from his Postal Union office, he had half unwillingly joined forces with MacNutt and had followed that most adroit of wire-tappers to his uptown house, where, together, they were to cut in on Penfield's poolroom wires and make away with what spoils they could. He remembered his astonishment as the door swung back to MacNutt's secret ring, and Mabel Candler stood there in the doorway, looking half timidly out at them, with her hand still on the knob. He had thought her a mere girl at first, and imagined there had been a mistake in the house number, as he saw the well-groomed figure in black, with

its wealth of waving chestnut hair, and the brooding violet eyes with their wordless look of childish weariness. It was only later that he had taken note of the betraying fulness of her breast and hips, and the touch of mature womanhood in the shadows about the wistful eyes. He remembered the slow English voice, with its full-voweled softness of tone, as she answered MacNutt's quick questions, and again the girlishly winning smile with which she had welcomed him as her partner in that house of underground operating and unlooked for adventure.

Bit by bit he recalled their tasks and their perils together, their final revolt against MacNutt and the terrible penalty which it had involved.

What touched him most, as he paced the odorous, lamp-hung valley of the Rialto, was the memory of this wistful woman's efforts to lead him back to honesty. Each effort, he knew, had been futile, though for her sake alone he had made not a few unthought of struggles to be decent and open and aboveboard once more.

But the inebriation of great hazards was in his veins. They had taken great chances together; and thereafter, he felt, it could be only great chances that would move and stir and hold them. Now he would never be content, he knew, to lounge about the quiet little inns of life, with the memory of those great adventures in his heart and the thirst for those vast hazards in his veins.

As he turned, in Longacre Square, to look back at that turbulent valley of lights below him, he remembered, incongruously enough, that the midnight Tenderloin was the most thoroughly policed of all portions of the city—the most guarded of all districts in the world. And what a name for it, he thought—the Tenderloin, the tenderest and most delectable, the juiciest and the most sustaining, district in all New York for the lawless egoist, whether his self-seeking took the form of pleasure or profit!

A momentary feeling of repugnance at what was unlovely in life crept over him, but he solaced himself with the thought that, after all, it was the goodness in bad people and the badness in good people that held the mottled fabric together in its tight-meshed union of contradictions.

Then his spirit of loneliness returned to him, and his thoughts went back to Mabel Candler once more. He wondered why it was that her casual woman's touch seemed even to dignify and consecrate open crime itself. He felt that he was unable, now, to move and act without her. And as he thought of what she had grown to mean to him, of the sustaining sense of coolness and rest which she brought with her, he remembered his first restless night in New York, when he had been unable to sleep, because of the heat in his stifling little hall bedroom, and had walked the breathless, unknown streets, until suddenly on his face he had felt a cool touch of wind and the old-time balm of grass and trees and green things had struck into his startled nostrils. It was Central Park that he had stumbled on, he learned later; and he crept into it and fell placidly asleep on one of the shadowy benches.

His next memory, as he turned to take a last look down the light-hung cañon of the Rialto, was of the evening that he and his desk-mate, Eddie Crawford, had first driven down that luminous highway in a hansom, and the lights and the movement and the stir of it had gone to his bewildered young head. For he had leaned out over those titanic tides and exclaimed, with vague and foolish fierceness: "My God, Eddie, some day I'm going to get a grip on this town!"

II

It was not until night had settled down over the city that Durkin opened the back window of his little top-floor room and peered cautiously out.

There was, apparently, nothing

amiss. A noise of pounding came to him from the shipping-room of a lace importer below. A few scattered shafts of light glimmered from windows opposite. A hazy half-moon slanted down over the house-tops.

When Durkin leaned out of the window for the second time he held in his hand something that looked peculiarly like a fishing-pole. From it dangled two thin green wires, and with the metal hook on the end of it he tested and felt carefully up among the slovenly tangle of wires running out past the overhanging eave.

It was a silly and careless way of doing things, he inwardly decided, this lazy stringing of wires from house-top to house-top, instead of keeping them to the tunnels where they belonged. It was not only violating regulations, but was putting a premium on "lightning slinging." And he remembered what Mame had once said to him about criminals in a city like New York, how the careless riot of wealth seemed to breed them, as any uncleanness breeds bacteria; how, in a way, each was only a natural and inevitable agent, taking advantage of organic waste, seizing on the unguarded and the unorderly. She had even once argued that the criminal could lay claim to a distinct economic value, enjoining as he did continual alertness of attention and cleanliness of commercial method.

Yet the devil himself, he had somewhere read, could quote Scripture for his purpose; and his fishing-pole moved restlessly up and down, like a long finger feeling through tangled harp strings. Each time, almost, that his hook rested on one of the wires the little Bunnell relay on the table behind him spoke out feebly. To the trill and clatter of these metallic pulsations Durkin listened intently, until, determining that he had looped into the right wire, he made secure his switch and carefully drew down the window to within an inch of the sill.

Then he gave his studious attention to the little Bunnell relay. Its action was feeble and spasmodic. It was doing scant justice to what Durkin easi-

ly saw was a master hand toying with the rubber button at the end of the wire. It was not unusually quick operating, but as the dots and dashes flew on and on the interloper for a moment or two forgot the meaning of the messages in the clear-cut, crisp and precise beauty of the sender's Morse.

"That man," commented the admiring craftsman in Durkin, "is earning his eight dollars an hour!"

Then, adjusting his rheostat, he slowly and cautiously graduated his current, until new life seemed to throb and flow through the busy little piece of clicking metal. A moment later it was speaking out its weighty and secret messages, innocently, authoritatively, almost triumphantly, it seemed to the eavesdropper, bending over the glimmering little armature lever.

A quietly predaceous smile broadened on Durkin's intent face. He suddenly smote the table with an impetuous little rap of the knuckles, as he sat there listening.

"By heaven, this *will* open her eyes!" he cried, under his breath.

And he repeated the words, more abstractedly, as he lifted a telephone transmitter out on his table and threw open a switch on the wall, well concealed by the window-curtain.

He then adjusted a watch-case receiver to his ear, and settled quietly down in his chair. Striking a match, he held it poised six inches away from the cigar between his teeth. For the sounder had suddenly broken out into life once more, and strange and momentous things were flashing in to him over that little thread of steel. The match burned away and fell from his fingers. He shook himself together with an effort.

Then he snatched up a pencil, and with the watch-case receiver still at his ear and the Bunnell sounder still busy before him, he hurriedly wrote notes on the back of an envelope.

He felt like a lean and empty wharf-rat that had tunneled into a storehouse of unlimited provision. The very vastness of it amazed and stupefied him. He had been looking for

pennies, and behold, he had stumbled on a bank-note!

Then, as item by item he was able to piece his scattered shreds of information together, his mind became clearer and his nerves grew steadier.

He looked at his watch. It was twenty-six minutes past nine. As he had expected, and as had happened every night since Curry had installed the private wire in his Madison avenue residence, the operator on the uptown end of the line switched off. The sounder grew still, like a clock that had run down. The telephone wire still carried its occasional message in to him, but he knew that he could wait no longer.

It took him but a minute or two to detach his looping wire from the Curry private line. Then he threw back the switch of his telephone, concealed his transmitter, and caught up his hat and coat.

Five minutes later he was careering up Fifth avenue in a hansom. A new interest, submerged in the sterner tides of life, drifted in on him as he drew nearer the Ralston and Mabel Candler. He began to meditate on how much he had been missing out of existence of late, and even how empty triumph and conquest might be if unshared with another. Some vague and gently disturbing inkling of just how much a woman could become to a man crept into the quieter backgrounds of his consciousness. And with a man of his walk in life, unaccompanied, isolated, migratory, this muffling and softening element was doubly essential.

He sent his card up to Mame with an unreasonably beating heart. Word came down to him, in time, that she was engaged, but that she would see him in twenty minutes.

"But I must see her, and at once!" he told the impassive clerk.

It would be possible in twenty minutes, was the second message which came down to him.

Mame engaged—and not able to see him! The very idea of it startled and enraged him. Who had the right to

stand between them? he demanded of himself, with irrational fierceness. And out of the very midst of his soft and consuming eagerness to see her sprang up a mad fire of jealousy and uncertainty. Who was there, he again demanded of himself, who was there that could come in this way between Mabel Candler and himself, at such a time and under such circumstances? After all, her career was one of open and continuous deception. There was MacNutt! And Ottenheimer! And a dozen more! She made it her business to deceive and dupe others, so artfully, so studiously, so laboriously—why would she not use her tools on him as well? Was she, indeed, so open and candid as he had taken her to be?—she, with all her soft little feline graces, and with all that ambiguous and unknown past of hers!

And yet he remembered how she had held out against him, how he, with his laxer code, had hurt and wounded every feeling of her sensitive nature. Even before this he had tried to argue that crime in one phase of life implied moral weakness in all other phases of that same career. Yet there she obstinately though pantingly stood, unyielding, stanch, clean of mind and life, a woman of stern honor—and through it all an adventuress and a robber! A blackleg with the conscience of a schoolgirl!—and he laughed inwardly and bitterly at the cheap irony of it all.

His icy and exacting scrutiny of her, as he stepped into her private room, sapped all the warmth out of her greeting. She had thrown on a loose-fitting dressing-gown of pale blue, which showed the white fulness of her arms and throat and darkened the violet of her brooding and seemingly unsatisfied eyes. She was more than beautiful, Durkin told himself, with a little gulp of anguish; but why had the corroding poison of his life been poured into a glass so tinted and fragile and lovely to the sight! For there, as he looked at her with still angry and suspicious eyes, he realized, for the first time, just what she was to him, just

how completely and implacably she had subjugated him.

"What is it?" she demanded shrilly, with a sudden little flutter of fear, standing halfway across the room.

"Who was in this room with you?" he demanded heatedly.

She studied his face for a moment or two, slowly shaking her head from side to side. He noticed the tumbled wealth of her glinting chestnut hair, here and there almost a golden red, and again a gulp of anguish swelled at his throat. It was no wonder MacNutt had made good use of her.

"Who has been up here with you?" he repeated miserably, but inexorably.

She seemed to sigh a little, and then her slow English laugh melted out through the room. It was a quiet and sorrowful little laugh, but it shattered the tragedy from the overstrained moment.

"You foolish boy!" she said sorrowfully, as she turned to put the belittered room to rights. "It was only the dressmaker I sent for, as soon as I got here. I haven't a rag! You know that! And you know how often you have said that persons in our sort of business ought to dress well."

The mad wave of doubt that still tumbled him back and forth ebbed suddenly away as a woman of forty, short and stolid, stepped briskly and quietly out of the inner bedroom. She bowed a businesslike good night to them as she passed out into the hallway, carrying a handbag.

"And this is the way you welcome me back!" reproved Mame, as she drew away from him and fell to studying his face once more. "Well, we can at least talk *business*," she added bitterly, on the heels of his awkward silence. "And that, I know, will appeal to you!"

Durkin bowed to the stroke, and even made belated and disjointed efforts of appeasement. But the petals seemed to have fallen from the shaken flower, and a teasing sense of her aloofness from him oppressed his mind. In fact, it had always been in the full hue and cry of these adventures with

the grim powers of the law that she had seemed nearest to him.

The thought came to him, with a quick sense of terror, of how he might suffer at a time or in a situation not so ridiculously transparent as the present. If, indeed, she ever did give him actual cause for jealousy, how it would rend and tear those roots which had pierced so much deeper than he had ever dreamed! And for a passing moment he felt almost afraid of himself.

III

"INDEED, yes, you must have had trouble!" concurred Durkin, as Mame ended a description of her stormy week in the West, where a Government cotton report had leaked so mysteriously from the wires.

"It wasn't the trouble so much—only I felt so cruelly alone."

"That's the drawback in doing this sort of thing by oneself!"

"We really ought to hunt in pairs, don't you think, like timber-wolves?"

She turned and looked at him, with a mocking and yet a warmer light coming into her eyes, as she sniffed girlishly at his cigar-scented glove, which she had been toying with nervously while she talked.

"And out of it all," he went on, "when brokerage fees and other things are counted, we have made just three hundred and sixty-seven dollars."

"Only that?"

"You see, I had only the thirty-minute margin to work on."

She pushed back her hair with a languid hand.

"But why cry over spilt milk?" she asked wearily. Firmer and firmer, she felt, this mad dream of money-getting was taking hold on him.

"Especially when we seem about to wade knee-deep in cream."

She made a last effort to fall in with his mood of ruthless aggression.

"Yes; what's this you were going to open my eyes with?"

The final vestige of his clouded re-

straint slipped away from Durkin's mind.

"I had better start right at the beginning, hadn't I?" he queried, cigar in hand, as Mame nodded comfortably to the silent question as to whether or not he might smoke.

"I suppose you know that Curry was once a New Orleans cotton broker. It was a little over two years ago that he first came to New York, with about a million and a half of his own, and an available three or four million belonging to a pool that was to back him through thick and thin. This they did, when he became a member of the Cotton Exchange. Then step by step he began to plan out his campaign, patiently and laboriously plotting and scheming and manipulating and increasing his power, until the newspaper men dropped into the habit of speaking of him as the Cotton King, and the old home pool itself got a little afraid of him, and held a few secret meetings to talk things over."

"But how did this campaign end?"

"It has not ended. Of just how it will end only two men, outside of Curry and his confidential old head broker down on the Exchange floor, have any inkling."

"Who is the other man?" asked Mame quietly.

Durkin smiled covertly, with a half-mockingly bowed "Thanks!"

"The other man, not counting myself, is the operator, or, rather, the private secretary he keeps at the home end of the wire he has had put into his house, for carrying on his collateral manipulations, as it were."

"And then comes yourself!"

"Then comes myself," he added confidently.

The woman settled back in her leather-lined armchair, locking her slender white fingers together above her head. The clustered lights of the chandelier threw heavy shadows about her quiet eyes, and for the first time Durkin noticed a tender little hollow just under her cheek-bones, lending an indescribable touch of tragedy to the old-time softer oval of her face.

"Now, this is what our friend Curry has been doing, in a nutshell. For months and months he has been the acknowledged bull leader of the Exchange. Point by point, week by week and day by day he has managed to send cotton up. Where it was at first 11 and 12 and perhaps 13 cents, he has shouldered, say, August cotton up to 16.55, and July up to 17.30, and May up to 17.20. Day before yesterday July cotton advanced to 17.65 in New Orleans. Some time, and some time mighty soon—if not tomorrow, then the next day, or perhaps even the next—every option is going to go still higher. And this man Curry is the imperial dictator of it all. He is known to have interests behind him that amount to millions now. And this is the point I'm coming to: this present week is to see the rocket go up and burst."

Durkin was on his feet by this time, pacing up and down the room.

"The first, but not the final, climax of all this plotting is twenty-cent cotton."

"Has it ever been that before?"

"Never! It has not been above seventeen cents, not since 1873!" declared Durkin excitedly. "But here is the important part of it all, the second climax, as it were. When it strikes nineteen his old home pool are going to abdicate. They are going to turn traitor on him, I mean, and suddenly stand from under. Then here is the third and last climax: Curry knows this fact; he knows they're making ready to crush him. And when they get ready he's going to turn and smash 'em, smash 'em and sling 'em down, even though he goes with them in the crash. Which he won't, if he's the Curry I take him to be. In other words, Mame, at the right moment he is going to abdicate from the bull movement absolutely, before it is publicly realized."

"It all seems vague and misty to me—but I suppose you know."

"Know? Why, I've been rioting through his holy of holies for over a week now. I've been cutting in and reading his own private wire. He

firmly intends to forsake this bull movement, which, apparently, he has spent so much time and toil in building up. But in reality, out of the crash that comes with a collapsing market—and it must collapse when he stands from under!—he is to sit and see a million or two rain down into his lap."

"But can he, one solitary man, do all this—I mean do it unmistakably, inevitably?"

"Yes, he can. I firmly believe that nothing short of a miracle can now upset his plan. Today he is not only the leader of the cotton pit; he is both openly and tacitly the supreme dictator of the market—of the world's market. Why, last week, when he publicly announced that he was going down to Lakewood for a couple of days, the market fell back to 12.85 for an hour or two, and he had to jump in and start buying, just to give a little order to things. Somebody even said that when his wife and an actress friend of hers visited the Exchange gallery he asked them if they'd like to see a little panic on the floor. The actress said she'd love to see cotton go up a few points, if he wouldn't mind. So he started down into the pit and pulled the strings until his puppets danced to their hearts' content."

Mame nodded her appreciation of the scene's dramatic values, and waited for Durkin to continue.

"And one minor result of all that was that half an hour later a well-known cotton merchant was found in his chair, with a slowly widening stain of red on his shirt front, as the evening papers put it. He had shot himself through the heart—utterly ruined by that last little capricious rise in our Cotton King's market."

"Who, after all, is not much better than a wire-tapper!" exclaimed the woman half bitterly.

"There's a difference—he thinks in big figures and affairs; we, up till now, have worked and worried and fretted over little things. This man Curry, too, is a sort of Napoleon. 'You have to smash the eggs to make your ome-

let' was all he said when he heard that a big brokerage firm had closed its one hundred and twenty-five offices because of his bull operations. Why, this week he's making his clerks eat and sleep right in the offices—he's turned one of the rooms into a sort of dormitory and has their meals sent up to them. And outside of all this he's manipulating his own underground movement, doing that over his home wire, after his regular office hours."

"And this is the wire you have tapped?"

"Yes, that's the wire that has been giving me my information—or, rather, little scattered shreds of it. But here, mind, is where the difficulty comes in. Curry has got to let his partner, Green, down in New Orleans, in on the last movement of his campaign, so that the two can strike together. But he is wise, oh, very wise, and he isn't trusting that tip to any open wire. When the time comes it's to be a cipher message. It will read, 'Helen sails'—then such and such a time on such and such a day. That message Curry's confidential operator will send out over the wire, under the protection of a quadruplex, from his Wall Street office. And that is the message I have to intercept."

She was moving her head slowly up and down, gazing at him with unseeing eyes.

"And you have some plan for doing it?"

"Precisely," replied Durkin, wheeling nervously back and forth. "This is where I've got to run the gauntlet of the whole Postal Union system, cut in on their double-guarded wires, and get away with my information without being caught."

"But you can't do it, Jim. It's impossible."

"Oh, but it is possible," he said, halting for a moment before her. "Here's where the climax comes to my story—the one I started to tell you over the 'phone. You see, just at the time of that little conduit fire the Postal Union Company was having trouble with the Electricians' Union. I was

just laying in the supplies for that uptown loop of mine when I found they were offering two dollars an hour for expert work. I jumped on a Broadway car and took the plunge."

"What plunge?"

"I mean that I applied for work down there as a cable-splicer."

"Wasn't it rather dangerous work?"

"Yes, a trifle so, I suppose. But none of the inside men was on the force. No one there knew me from Adam. And it was worth it, too!"

"You mean——?"

"I mean that a certain cable-splicer has the entrée to that conduit, that he has a hand-made chart as to its wire disposition, and—well, and several other things!"

He waited for some word of appreciative triumph from her. As she remained silent, he went on again.

"And I mustn't forget to tell you that I've leased a little basement place not far from Pine street. I'm going to do commercial printing and that sort of thing. I've got a sign out and the power all ready—only my presses are slow in coming!"

"And will be still further delayed, I presume?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

Some mysterious touch of his excitement communicated itself to the listening woman. As she comprehended his plot, point by point, she began to realize the vast possibilities that lay before them. Nor did she lose sight of the care and minuteness with which Durkin had reconnoitered his territory and laid his mine. And added to this was the zest of stalking the stalker; it carried with it an ameliorating tang of irony.

As often happened with her in moments of excitement, the expanded pupils of Mame's violet eyes crept over and blotted out the iris, until out of the heavy shadows that hung under her full brow they all but glowed with an animal-like luminousness—"as though a halo had melted and run down into them," Durkin had once playfully described it.

He had looked for some word of dis-

approval from her, for he could remember how often, with her continual scruples, she had taken the razor-edge off his enthusiasm, when he stood on the brink of adventuring with something big and momentous. So he studied her face abstractedly, his own alight with an eager and predaceously alert look which only his half-whimsical, half-boyish smile held above the plane of sheer vulpine craftiness.

"Why, this man Curry," he went on, still standing in front of her, "has got such a grip on the market that he can simply juggle with it. Before this boom you or I could buy a bale of cotton on a dollar margin. Today most of the brokerage houses insist on a four-dollar margin, some of them demand a five, and it's said that a ten-dollar margin can still be looked for."

"But still I don't see how one man can do this, and keep it up!"

"It's mostly all the natural outcome of his own, individual, long-headed plot. Beyond that it's a mere infection, a mania, an operation of mob law. Curry, all along, is crying out that the demand has outgrown the supply, and that the commercial world has got to get used to the idea of twenty-cent cotton. In '96 it sold away down around six cents, and ever since then mills have been increasing their spindles. In ten years, Curry's papers claim, the mills have added more than seventeen million spindles, to swell this tremendous cry for cotton. That's his argument, to tide him along until he kicks the post out and the drop comes. Then, of course, he and the rest of his bull pool have been buying, buying, always openly and magnificently, yet all the while selling quietly and secretly."

"And they call this legitimate business?" demanded Mame, with a tinge of scorn in her voice.

"Yes, they call it finance. But it's about as legitimate, on the whole, as the pea-and-thimble game I used to watch up at the country fairs in Canada. In other words, Mame, when we carry on our particular line of business cleanly and decently, we're a hanged

sight more honest than these Exchange manipulators!"

"But not recognized!" she cut in drily, for she knew that with thisunction of comparison he was salving a still tender conscience.

"That's because we are such small fry," he went on heatedly. "But, by heaven, when we get this thing going, I guess we'll rather count a little!"

"And what is to keep us from getting it going?"

He wheeled on her suddenly.

"One thing, and one hard thing!"

"Well?"

"Within twenty-four hours we've got to have ten thousand dollars!"

IV

"TEN thousand dollars is a great deal of money," said Mame easily, with a languid shrug of her shoulders.

"It is a great deal! But we're up against a great deal! If we had twice as much it would be even better. I have a possible twelve hundred now, altogether—just a scrawny, miserable twelve hundred! I got most of it through dabbling in this cotton of Curry's. Tomorrow morning every cent of it goes down to Robinson & Little, and if the market is moderately steady and he takes a two-dollar margin, I double that amount."

"Robinson & Little? Who are they? New friends of yours?"

"They're the big Wall Street people. I had to pay three hundred dollars for a letter to that firm. I still have a suspicion it was forged, too, and I've been getting acquainted with 'em and showing 'em that I'm all right. When the eleventh hour comes, and when I have to cut in on Curry's Postal Union wire downtown, we have to tear round to Robinson & Little, flop over with the market, and buy cotton short, on a stop order. It all depends on what margin we may have to put up, whether we make forty thousand dollars or a hundred and forty thousand dollars. Curry, you may be sure, will try to start the thing off as quietly as

possible. So a normal market will bring a more normal margin, and give us something worth while to play on."

"Something worth while!" she mused absently. Then she came and stood by Durkin, and studied his face once more. Some sense of isolation, of unhappy aloofness from his kind, touched and wrung her feelings. She caught at his arm with a sudden companionable enthusiasm, and joined him in pacing the room.

"After all, there *would* be something big and wide and sweeping about this sort of work, wouldn't there?"

"Yes; it's a blamed sight better than poolroom piking!" he cried. "It's living—it's doing things!"

"I believe I could plunge in it, and glory in it," she went on consolingly.

"There's just one drawback—just one nasty little blot on the face of the fun," he ventured, catching at the sustaining arm of her enthusiasm.

"And that is——?"

"We've got to get this ten thousand dollars, just for a day or two."

"But have you any idea as to how, or where, or when?"

"Yes, I have," he answered, looking at her steadily. There seemed to be some covert challenge in his glance, but she faced him unwaveringly.

"Say it out, Jim; I'm not afraid."

"I mean *you* must get it! You've got to borrow it!"

He began bravely enough, but he hesitated before the startled scorn on her face.

"You mean I've—I've got to steal it?"

He held up a protesting hand. Then he went to the half-open door of her inner room and closed it carefully.

"No; as I said before, we cannot and must not steal it. It may be called theft, of course, but every cent of it will be returned. No, no; listen to me—I have it all figured out. Only, it has to be done this very night!"

"Tonight?" she said, with a reproving little cry.

"Yes, tonight. And this is why. I've been desperate, of course, and have been looping every telephone wire that

runs near my uptown room, hoping against hope for a chance to pick up something to work on. The only thing that gave me that chance was Theodore Van Schaick's house-wire. Now, listen. Two days ago his daughter Lydia came of age. I could tell you most of the things she got, and how she has been 'phoning gratitude and thanks and girlish rapture out round the city. But among other things Miss Lydia received from her father was a neat little bundle, not long out of the Sub-Treasury. It was made up of one hundred equally neat little pieces of parchment, and each one of them is a one-hundred-dollar bank-note!"

"And I'm to crawl through one of her windows and burglarize the house of this amount!"

"No, no, Mame—listen to me a moment! Yesterday Miss Lydia telephoned her Uncle Cedric about this money. She feels nervous having it around and wants it put somewhere. Her level-headed old Uncle Cedric advised her to take it down tomorrow to the Second National Bank and open a deposit account with it. And this Lydia intends to do. Tonight her ten thousand dollars are laid carefully away in a glove-box in one of her chiffonier drawers in her own private bedroom. So tonight is our only chance!"

"Couldn't I sandbag her in the morning, on her way downtown?" demanded Mame, with mock seriousness. She had learned not to ask too much of life, and she was struggling to school herself to the thought of her new role.

"No, my dear girl, it can be done so much easier than that. Her mother and her younger sister are still at Driftwood, their summer place in Mamaroneck. At four o'clock this afternoon they sent into the city a certain Miss Annie Seabrooke. She is a St. Luke's graduate, a professional nurse who's been looking after old Mrs. Van Schaick. This lady, apparently, is a good deal of a hypochondriac. The nurse, of course, has to get things ready for her patient's return. I have

already met Miss Seabrooke at the Grand Central Station, and at Miss Lydia's urgent request installed her overnight at the Holland House—this, by the way, is her bag—so that the whole house might be given over to Miss Lydia's coming-of-age party."

Mame was moving her head slowly up and down; light had sifted in to her through all the tangle of clouds.

"In this bag, among other things, you'll find a nurse's uniform—it'll fit a little loose, I'm afraid; Miss Seabrooke is a big, raw-boned Canadian girl—and in forty minutes from now you've got to be inside that uniform and inside the Van Schaick house."

"And then——?"

"Then you have, by some means or other, to get hold of a certain glove-box in Miss Lydia Van Schaick's chiffonier drawer!"

"But the others—the servants—won't they know me?"

"You were engaged in Mamaroneck; not one of the city servants has seen your face."

"But it will be eleven and after—was my train delayed?"

"No, not delayed—but you took a later train."

"And do you realize just how hard all this is going to be?"

"It's not easy, I know," he answered; "but it's our only chance."

"There might be another," she ventured. "I'm not certain of it, but it started me thinking, at the time."

"Well?" he said half impatiently.

"It happened when I went into that little Postal Union office at Broadway and Thirty-seventh street. The relays and everything are in the same room, you know, behind the counter, and a wire screen. I wanted to send for my dressmaker to come right down tonight. While I was sitting at a little side desk chewing my pen-handle and trying to boil seventeen words down into ten a man came in with a rush message. I could see him out of the corner of my eye. It was Sunset Bryan, the race-track plunger, and it occurred to me that it might be worth

while to know what he was sending out."

"Did he see you or know you?"

"I took good pains that he shouldn't. So I scrawled away on my blank and just sat there and read the ticker as the operator took the despatches off the file and sent them out. Here is the wording of Sunset Bryan's message, as well as I can remember it: 'Duke—of—Kendall—runs—tomorrow—get—wise—and—wire—St. Louis—and—South!'"

"Well, what of it?" Durkin asked.

"Why, this Bryan is the man who took one hundred and ten thousand dollars out of the Aqueduct ring in one day. Since the Gravesend meeting began, people say, he has made nearly half a million. He's a sort of race-track Curry. He keeps close figures on every race he plays. He has one hundred men on his pay-roll, and makes his calculations after the most minute investigating and figuring. It stands to reason that he manipulates a little, though the Pinkerton men, as I suppose you know, have never been able to get him off the Eastern tracks. Now, my belief is that there is something cooked up for tomorrow afternoon, and if we could only find out what this Duke of Kendall business is we might act on it in time."

She waited for Durkin to speak. He tapped the top of his head meditatively with his right forefinger, pursing his lips as his mind played over the problem.

"Yes, we might. But how are we to find out what the Duke of Kendall's merely running means?"

"I took the trouble to look up the Duke of Kendall. He is a MacIntosh horse, the stable companion to Mary J., and ridden by Shirley, a new jockey. My idea is, Jim, that this horse is going to run under heavy odds for what they call 'a long shot.'"

"But still, how could we make sure?"

"I could go and ask Sunset Bryan himself."

Durkin threw up his hand with a gesture of angry disapproval.

"That beast! He's—he's unspeak-

able! He's the worst living animal in America!"

"I shouldn't be afraid of him," she answered quietly.

"The whole thing comes too late in the game anyway," broke in Durkin pettishly, with a second gesture of disgust. Then he added, more gently: "Good heavens, Mame, I don't want to see *you* get mixed up with that kind of cur! It wouldn't be right and fair!"

"After all, we are not so different," she responded, with acidulated mildness.

He took her hand in his with real pain written on his face.

"Don't talk that way," he pleaded; "it hurts."

She smoothed his hair with her free hand, quietly, maternally.

"Then you had rather that I—I borrowed this money from the Van Schaick house?" she asked him conciliatingly.

"It is the choice of two evils," he answered unhappily, all his older enthusiasm now burnt down into the ashes of diffidence.

"If only I was sure that it would go back," she said dreamily, as she studied his face.

"It *will* go back!" he responded determinedly, "even though I have to make it, dollar by dollar, and though it takes me twenty years! But I tell you, Mame, that will not be needed. Here we have the chance of a lifetime. If we only had the money to start with, the whole business could be carried on openly and decently—barring, of course," he added, with his sudden shamefaced smile, "the little bit of cutting-in I'll have to do downtown on the Curry wires!"

"One minute—before we go any farther with this. Supposing we successfully get this glove-box, and successfully watch Curry, and on the strength of our knowledge invest this money, and get our returns, and find ourselves with enough—well, with enough not to starve on—will you promise me this: that it will be the last?"

"But why should it be the last?"

"You know as well as I do! You know that *I* want to be honest, to live straight and aboveboard; but a hundred times more, that *I* want to see *you* honest and aboveboard!"

He studied the tense and passionate mood that flitted across her face, that seemed to deepen the shadows about her brooding violet eyes.

"I would do anything for you, Mame!" he said, with an inadequate and yet eloquent little outthrust of the arms.

"Then do this for me! Let us get back to the daylight world again!"

"But would it satisfy us? Would we—?"

"Would we—?" she echoed forlornly. Then she turned suddenly away, to hide a trace of inconsequential tears.

"We have *got* to!" she cried out passionately over her shoulder, as she stooped over the suit-case and deftly opened it. A moment later she was rummaging hurriedly through its neatly packed contents.

"You haven't promised!" she murmured, her face still low over the womanly white linen, and the little cap and apron and uniform which she was gently shaking out before her.

She rose to her feet and turned to him.

"I promise you—anything!" he cried, in the teeth of all his inner misgivings. He followed her to the open window.

"Then kiss me!" she said, with a little exhausted sigh of surrender, as she sank into his arms, and her lonely and hungry body felt the solace of his strength above and about it. And in that minute they lost all count of time and place, and for them, with the great glimmering granite city stretching away at their feet, there was neither past nor future.

V

MAME waited until complete quiet reigned over the house. Then she noiselessly opened her door, and

peered up and down the darkened hallway.

A sudden thought came to her, as she stood there in the silence, and, slipping back to her room, she took first a hot-water bottle out of her nurse's bag, and then a hypodermic syringe from its neat little morocco case. Miss Annie Seabrooke, she decided, was sadly addicted to the use of morphine, for in her bag beside the syringe case she found a little bottle bearing its telltale chemical formula: C₁₇H₁₉NO₃.

She removed the screw-top from the graduated "barrel," and in its place adjusted the glistening little hollow needle. Then she carefully filled the graduated tube with its innocent-looking liquid, and wrapping the syringe in her pocket-handkerchief, thrust it into the bosom of her bodice. Many things lay ahead of her, and before the night was out even this might be of use to her.

The hot-water bottle she carried openly in her hand, as she once more softly opened the door and crept out into the half-lighted hallway.

They had given her a room on the third floor, a concession, she told herself, to the dignity of her profession. Most of the servants slept on the fourth floor. It had, accordingly, been by way of the front stairs that the bibulous English butler, with more than one open blink of admiration, had brought her up to her quarters for the night.

She felt that she would like to find the back stairway, the stairway by which the household servants came and went.

She moved forward softly, listening a second at doorways as she passed. Then she suddenly stood transfixed, panting a little. For the sound of approaching footsteps fell on her startled ear.

To turn and run was out of the question, for she had no knowledge of where or into what she might flee. To hesitate longer would be equally fatal. Instant action only could save her.

As quick as thought she opened the door on her left, and stepped inside.

"Is it you, Adolph?" a whispered voice asked quietly out of the gloom. It was a woman's voice—she must have been a young woman, Mame felt—a voice that was neither startled nor unhappy.

She stood, then, in one of the servants' rooms. She pictured to herself the different faces she had seen below stairs, though in none of them could she remember any sign or hint of what she had now stumbled upon. But the pregnancy of that muffled question gave Mame a flashing consciousness of the wheels within even those inner wheels in the dark and complicated mills of life.

"Hsssssh!" said the intruder softly, as she quickly swung to the door, padding it with her hand.

She stood there, waiting until the steps passed by. They were brisk, businesslike steps, those of a woman, mingled with the tinkling of a chain of keys. She surmised that it was the housekeeper, on her last rounds for the night.

She realized the peril of another minute in the room. The wiring of the house, she had already noticed, with the quickness of an expert, was both thorough and modern. Any moment the turning of a bedside button might flood the room with brilliant light and betray her beyond redemption.

"Sssssssh!" she said again sharply, as though in warning, and a moment later dodged out through the door, going as noiselessly as she had come.

But the ground was now dangerous, she felt; and she was glad to escape to the comparative freedom of a wider hallway, running at right angles to the one she had just left. This surely led to the back stairs, she argued, as she groped her way stealthily forward. She was even debating whether it would not be better to risk the fully lighted front stairs, rather than lose time as she was doing, when her groping hands came in contact with the cool wood of the polished balustrade.

Her foot was on the carpeted second step, when she drew back, with a terrified catch of the breath.

The familiar click of a light-button had thrown the entire hall and stairway into dazzling light. A man stood at the foot of the stairs, in his slippers feet, with his hand still on the button. He had not yet seen her; but it was too late to escape.

It was the bibulous English butler who had shown her to her room. In a crook of his arm he carried a Sauterne bottle and a nearly empty champagne bottle, carefully recorked. It was plain, Mame argued, that he was pilfering a nightcap for himself. That gave her at least a shred of courage.

She hesitated only the fraction of a second. Then she coldly and briskly descended the stairs, with her hot-water bottle in her hand.

The butler fell back a step or two at the sudden apparition, blinked at her unsteadily in the strong light, and made a gigantic effort to draw himself up.

Mame's first intention had been to march disdainfully past him; but this, she remembered, was now out of the question. It was midnight or past, and for all his unsteadiness of limb he was a shrewd and capable person, well trained in his duties.

"Well, miss, what is it?" She could see him putting on his official attitude, just as he might draw on his serving-coat. The new nurse, apparently, took cold easily, for she still wore her galoshes.

"Which way do I go to the kitchen?" she demanded curtly.

"The kitchen, miss, is closed." He was looking at her with his pale and beady little eyes. "What were you wanting?"

"I must have some hot water," she answered, swaying her instrument of deliverance before her.

"There is a bathroom on your floor, miss, two doors to the right of your own door." He spoke thickly but peremptorily. Mame could plainly see that he was not to be juggled with.

"I said hot water, not warm," she retorted almost angrily.

"You'll find a gas-heater in the bathroom, miss," he added, more respectfully. She tried to wither him with a look, but it was unavailing. He even preceded her to her own door, turning the lights on and off as they went.

A moment later, as she stood biting the end of her fingers in mingled vexation and anxiety, she could hear the sound of running water, and the hollow puff of a lighted gas-flame. She wondered, dreadingly, if she was never to get rid of the man. As she waited, she let down her hair.

The butler appeared with a steaming pitcher. He entered unsteadily, to her preoccupied "Come!" He looked at her over his shoulder as he put the steaming pitcher down on her dresser.

"A damned fine girl!" he said to himself, as he looked at her for a second time, and seemed loath to leave. In fact, months afterward, he dilated to the second cook on the wonder of that chestnut hair, which now fairly blanketed the girl's head and shoulders.

"Are you in pain, miss?" he asked anxiously, coming nearer to her. His attitude was cogent, and yet non-committal.

"No," she said icily, and then she added, more discreetly, "No—not much."

"Isn't there anything I can do for you?" he asked, still unabashed.

It would have been laughable, under other circumstances, Mame felt—this solicitous tenderness of a too responsive English butler.

"Yes, you can leave this room," she said steadily. "I shall not want anything more."

A sudden flame of audacious heat crept into the bloated face above her, but the butler saw that this woman meant what she said, and silently left the room, nursing his two bottles in the crook of his arm.

A shudder, as momentarily benumbing as a chill, swept over Mame from head to foot. Then a sudden passion to get out where she could breathe and move took its place—at whatever

ultimate loss—only to get away from that house of benumbing horrors.

The mood passed, however, and with an effort she shook her tired nerves together. Then still once more she groped her way out through the darkness. Now, however, there was neither trepidation nor hesitancy in her silent movements, as she flitted through the hallway, and passed like a shadow down the dark stairs.

She paused only once—at the door which she knew was Lydia Van Schaick's bedroom. In an oriel window, opposite this door, was a little alcove fitted up with bookshelves, a highly polished writing-table and two low-seated rattan lounging-chairs. On one end of the writing-table stood a flat silver vase holding a spray of roses; on the other end stood a desk telephone transmitter and an oblong folio of green morocco with "Telephone Addresses" stamped in gold on its richly tooled cover. All this Mame noticed with one quick glance, as, nursing the knob in her cautious fingers, she turned it slowly.

The door was securely locked, from the inside.

One chance remained to her—by way of the little white-tiled bathroom, which she had caught a glimpse of on her first journey up through the house. This bathroom, she knew, would open into the girl's boudoir itself.

This door was unlocked. A moment later she was inside, and the door was closed behind her. She groped carefully across the tiled flooring, until her finger-tips came in contact with a second door, which creaked a little at her touch, for it stood a few inches ajar.

This door she opened, inch by inch, in terror of that tiny hinge-creak. It was a sleeping-room she knew the moment she had crept inside; and it held a sleeper, for the air seemed laden with some subtle fragrance of warmth and soft womanhood.

Mame listened with strained attention, hoping to overhear the quiet and regular breathing of the sleeper. But no sound reached her ears.

Through the muffling blackness she could dimly make out the open doorway leading into what must be the girl's sitting-room. In that room, Mame felt, would stand the chiffonier.

She felt her way to the foot of the bed. There she stood, strained second after second, still listening. No sound came from the sleeper; but she could feel her presence there, as though the room had been steeped in noonday light.

Step by step, then, she crawled and edged her way into the second vault of black silence, feeling with outstretched fingers for each piece of furniture. The chiffonier, some womanly intuition told her, would stand between the two heavily curtained windows.

Her feelings had not misled her. It was a well-made piece of furniture, and the top drawer opened noiselessly. This was explored with light and feverish fingers, as a blind woman might. But it held nothing beyond laces and scattered bits of jewelry, and filmy things she could not name and place.

The second drawer opened less readily, and a key had been left in the lock. She touched little leather boxes, deciding they must be jewel-cases, and methodic little layers of silk and linen, and a package or two of papers. Then her fingers fell on something cold, and hard, and purposeful. It was a woman's little revolver, obviously, with a jeweled handle. She explored the trigger-guard and the safety-latch with studious fingers, and decided that it was a 32-calibre hammerless.

Then her startled hand went up to her lips, and she wheeled noiselessly about where she stood. It could not have been a sound that she heard. It was only a presence that had made itself felt to some sixth sense in her.

It was nothing that she had heard or seen, but she leaned forward and studied the surrounding gloom intently, from side to side.

Acting under some quick subliminal impulse, she picked the little hammerless weapon up out of the drawer, with one hand, while her other hand explored its farther end. This exploring

hand felt feverishly along the edges of what seemed a mother-of-pearl writing-portfolio, and rummaged quickly and deftly down among laces and silks, until her fingers came in contact with the glazed surface of a little oblong box.

There could be no two thoughts as to what that box was. It was the glove-box which held that particular package for which she had already dared so much.

An awakened and alert sixth sense still warned her of something ominous and imminent; but there was neither fear nor hesitation in her actions as she drew out the little oblong box and with quick fingers thrust it, along with the toy-like hammerless, into the bosom of her dress.

Then she took three stealthy steps forward—and once again caught her breath sharply.

"Somebody is in this room!"

The intruder and thief fell back, step by step, gropingly, until she touched the chiffonier once more.

"Somebody is in this room!"

It was a woman's voice that broke in on the black silence, a quiet but sternly challenging voice, tremulous with agitation, yet strident with the triumph of conviction.

"Who is here?"

Mame did not move. She stood there, breathing a little heavily, watching. For now that sudden challenge neither thrilled nor agitated her. Consciousness, in some way, refused to react. Her tired nerves had already been strained to their uttermost; nothing now could stir her dormant senses.

Then she felt the sudden soft patter of bare feet on the floor.

Still she waited, wondering what this movement could mean. And, as she had felt at other times, in moments of dire peril, a sense of detached and disembodied personality seized her—a feeling that the mind had slipped its sheath of the body and was standing on watch beyond and above her. She suddenly heard the sound of a key being withdrawn. It was from the door leading into the hallway. Then, almost

before she realized what it meant, the bedroom door had been slammed shut, a second key had rattled and clicked decisively in its lock—and she was a prisoner!

A moment later she caught the sound of the signal-bell in the alcove.

"Central, quickly, give me the Sixty-seventh street police station!" It was the same clear and determined young voice that had spoken from the doorway.

There was a silence of only a few seconds. Then Mame heard the girl give her name and house number. This she had to repeat twice, apparently, to the sleepy sergeant.

"There is a burglar in this house. Send an officer here at once!"

A chill douche of apprehension seemed to restore Mame to her senses. She ran across the room and groped feverishly along the wall for the electric-light button. She could find none. But on the chiffonier was a drop-globe, and with one quick turn of the wrist the room was flooded with tinted light.

The prisoner first verified her fears; there was no way of escape by way of the windows. These, she at once saw, were utterly impossible.

So she stood in front of the mirror thinking hard and fast, and for the second time that night she decided to let down her hair. She could twist the bank-notes up into a little rope, and pin her thick braids closely down over them, and no one might think to search for them there.

She tore open her dress and flung the cover from the precious glove-box, scattering the gloves about in her feverish search.

The box held nothing. The money was not there. It had been hidden elsewhere. And she might never have known until it was too late!

Then methodically and more coolly she made a second search throughout the now lighted room. But nowhere could she find the package she needed. And, after all, it was too late!

So she set to work to rearrange the chiffonier, vacuously, and did what she could to put the room once more

in order. This done, she took up her hot-water bottle, and still told herself that she must not give up. Then she seated herself in a little white-and-gold rocker, and waited, quietly blazing out through her jungle of danger each different narrow avenue of expediency.

"Poor Jim!" she murmured, under her breath, with one dry sob.

The hum of voices came to her from the hallway—the servants, obviously, had been awakened. She could hear the footsteps come to a stop without, and the shuffling of slippers feet on the hardwood floor. Then came the drone of excited whisperings, the creak and jar of doors opening and closing.

Then, remote and muffled and far-away, sounded the sharp ringing of a bell. Somebody out in the hallway gasped a relieved, "Thank heaven!"

Mame looked at herself in the mirror, adjusting her hair, and taking note of the two little circles of scarlet that had deepened and spread across her feverish cheeks.

Then she sat down once more, and swung the hot-water bottle from her forefinger, and waited.

She heard the dull thud of the front door closing and a moment later the sound of quick footsteps on the stairs.

She looked about the comfortable, rose-tinted room, with its gilded Louis clock, with its womanish signs and tokens, with its nest-like warmth and softnesses; she looked about her slowly and comprehensively, as though she had been taking her last view of life.

Then she rose and went to the door, for the police had arrived.

VI

DURKIN was both puzzled and apprehensive. That a hansom should follow his own at eleven o'clock at night, for some twenty-odd blocks, was a singular enough coincidence. That it should stop when he stopped, that it should wait, not a square away, for him to come out of his café and then shadow him home for another thirteen circuitous blocks, was more than a coinci-

dence. It was a signal for the utmost discretion.

It was not that Durkin, at this stage of the kaleidoscopic game, was given to wasting tissue in unnecessary worry. But there had been that mysterious cigar-light in the hallway. When he had glanced cautiously down through the darkness, leaning well out over the bannister, he had distinctly seen the little glow of light. Yet, with the exception of his own top-floor rooms, the building was given over to business offices, and by night he had invariably found the corridors empty and unused.

But when he descended quietly, to reconnoitre, he saw that no one went down to the street door. And no one, he could see equally well, remained on the stairs or in the halls, for he turned on the gas, floor by floor, as he went back to his rooms.

Yet nobody, intelligently trying to secrete himself, would thus flaunt a lighted cigar in the darkness. From the suave and mellow odor of that cigar, too, Durkin knew that the intruder was something more than the ordinary house-thief and night-hawk.

As he thought the matter over, comfortably lounging back in a big arm-chair up in his rooms, he tried to force himself to the pacifying conclusion that the whole affair was fortuitous. He would keep a weather-eye open for such casual occurrences, in the future; but he now had no time to bother with the drifting shadows of uncertainty. He had already that day faced more material dangers; there were also more substantial perils, he knew, rising up about him.

He flung himself back, with a sigh, after looking at his watch, and through the upward-threading drifts of his cigar smoke he wondered what was taking place in the house not two hundred yards away from him, where Mame was so wakefully watching and working, while he sat there, idly waiting.

He afterward decided that in his sheer weariness of body and mind he must have dozed off into a light sleep.

It was after midnight when he awoke with a start, a vague sense of impending evil heavy upon him.

His first thought, on awakening, was that someone had knocked. He glanced at his watch, as he sprang to open the door. It was on the point of one.

Mame should have been back an hour ago. Then he had fallen asleep, of a certainty, he decided, with electric rapidity of thought.

But this was she, come at last, he conjectured. Yet with that sense of impending danger still over him he stepped back and turned down the lights. Then he quietly and cautiously opened the door.

No one was there. He peered down through the gloom of the hallways, but still neither sound nor movement greeted him.

His now distraught mind quickly ran the gamut of possibilities. A bafflingly indeterminate impression seized him that somebody, somewhere, was reaching out to him through the midnight silence, trying to come in touch with him and speak to him.

He looked at the motionless clapper of his transmitter signal-bell, where he had discreetly muffled the little gong with a linen handkerchief. It could not have been the telephone.

Yet he caught up the receiver with a gesture of half-angered impatience.

"... in this house—send an officer at once!" were the words which sped along the wire into his listening ear.

An officer at once! Six quick strokes of conjecture seemed to form the missing link to his chain of thought.

"My God!" he cried in terror, "that means Mame!"

There had been a hitch, somewhere, and in some way. And that was the Van Schaicks telephoning for the police—yes, decided Durkin, struggling to keep his clearness of head, it would be first to the Sixty-seventh street station that they would send for help.

He had already learned, or striven to learn, at such work, not only to

think and to act, but to do his thinking while he did his acting.

He rummaged through a suit-case filled with lineman's tools and snatched up a nickel badge similar to that worn by inspectors of the Consolidated Gas Company. It was taking odds such as he had never before in his career dared to take. But the case, he felt, was desperate.

Once off the Avenue he ran the greater part of the way round the block, for he knew that in five minutes at the outside the police themselves would be on the scene. And as he ran he let his alert imagination play along the difficulties that walled him in, feeling, in ever-shifting fancy, for the line of least resistance.

He mounted the brownstone steps three at a time and tore at the bell. He pushed his way authoritatively up through a cluster of servants, shivering and chattering and whispering along the hall.

At a young woman in a crimson quilted dressing-gown, faced with baby-blue silk, he flashed his foolish little metal shield. She was a resolute-browed, well-poised girl, looking strangely boyish with her tumbled hair thrown loosely to one side.

"I'm the plain-clothes man, the detective from the police station."

He looked at her abstractedly and curtly shifted his revolver from his hip-pocket to his side-pocket. This caused a stir among the servants.

"Get those people out of here!" he ordered.

The resolute-browed young woman in the dressing-gown slipped a key into his hand and pointed to a doorway.

"This thing was half expected, ma'am, at headquarters," said Durkin hurriedly, as he fitted the key. "It's a woman, isn't it?"

The girl with the resolute brow and the tumbled hair could not say.

"But I think I understand," she went on hurriedly. "I had quite a large sum of money, several thousand dollars, in my room here!"

Durkin, who had stooped to unlock the door, turned on her quickly.

"And it's still in this room?" he demanded.

"No; it worried me too much. I was going to keep it, but I took it down to the bank this afternoon."

Then the girl said "Sir!" wonderfully; for Durkin had emitted a quick oath of anger. They were doubly defeated. By this time the bedroom door was open.

"Ah, I thought it would be a woman," he went on coolly, as he glanced at Mame's staring and wide eyes. "And, if I mistake not, Miss Van Schaick, this is Number 17358 at the Central Office."

Mame knew his chortle was one of hysteria, but still she looked and wondered. Once more Durkin flashed his badge as he took her firmly by one shaking wrist.

"You come with me," he said, with quiet authority, and step by step he led her out into the hallway.

"It's too bad!" broke in the girl in the dressing-gown half reluctantly, with an effort to see the prisoner's discreetly downcast face.

"An old offender!" said Durkin gruffly.

The bibulous English butler in the doorway shook his head knowingly, plainly intimating that he all along knew as much.

"Have these people watch the back of the house—every window and door, till the inspector and his men come up. I'll rap for the patrol from the front."

Durkin waited for neither reply nor questions, but hurried his charge down the stairway, across the wide hall and out through the heavy front door.

The audacity, the absurdity of it all made him light-headed, and he broke into a raucous laugh as he stood with her in the cool and free night air.

But once down on the sidewalk he caught her shaking hand in his and ran with her, ran desperately and madly, until the rattle and clatter of hoofs broke on his ear. It was a patrol-wagon rumbling round from the Avenue on the east. He would have turned back, but at the curb in front

of the Van Schaick mansion already a patrolman stood, rapping feverishly for help.

In his dilemma Durkin dropped breathlessly down an area stairs, feeling the limp weight of the woman on his body as he fell. He dragged her in under the shadow of the heavy brown-stone steps, behind a galvanized iron garbage can, hoping against hope that he had not been noticed and silently praying that if indeed the end was to come it would not come in a setting so sordid and mean and small.

A street cat, lean and gaunt and hungry-looking, slunk like a shadow down the area steps. The eyes of the two fugitives watched it intently; and as it slunk and crept from shadow to shadow it suddenly became, to the worn and depressed Durkin, a symbol of his own career, a homeless and migratory Hunger, outlawed, pursued, unresting, a ravenous and unappeased purloiner of a great city's scraps and tatters.

The soft pressure of Mame's arm on his own drove the passing thought from his mind. And they sat together on the stone slabs, silently, hand in hand, till the hoofs clattered and rattled past once more and the street noises died down and hastily opened windows were closed and footsteps no longer passed along the street above them.

Then they ventured cautiously out, and, waiting their chance, sauntered decorously toward the corner. There they boarded a passing car, bound southward and crowded to the doors with the members of a German musical club, who sang drunkenly and boisterously as they went.

It seemed the most celestial of music to Durkin, as he hung on a strap in their midst, with Mame's warm body hemmed in close to his, and the precious weight of it clinging and swaying there from his arm.

Suddenly he looked down at her.

"Where are you going tonight?" he asked.

Their eyes met. The tide of abandonment that had threatened to en-

gulf him slowly subsided, as he read the quiet pain in her gaze.

"I am going back to the Ralston," she said, with resolute simplicity.

"But, good heavens! think of the risk!" he still half-heartedly pleaded. "It's dangerous now!"

"My beloved own," she said quietly, with her habitual slow little head shake, "life has worse dangers than the Ralston!"

VII

MAME irrelevantly wondered, as she slowly wakened in response to the call that had been left at the hotel office, if Durkin were still sleeping.

His awakening, she knew, would be a gray and disheartening one. The meaning of their defeat would then come home to him, probably, for the first time, and once more, and with all her strength, she would have to help him face the old-time, dreaded monotony of inactive life.

"Poor Jim!" she murmured again under her breath.

She hoped, as she wakened to her world of realities, that he at least was sleeping, that he at least was getting his rest of nerve and body, for some heavy dregs of her own utter weariness of the previous night still weighed down her spirits and ached in her limbs.

She had always boasted that she could sleep like a child. "I make a rampart of my two pillows, and no worries ever get in!" Yet she now felt, as she waited for a lingering last minute or two in her warm bed, that she could lie there forever and still feel tired and still be unsatisfied with her too brief rest.

But she had already sternly made her plans for the day, and time, she knew, was precious. She at once ordered up an ample breakfast of fruit and eggs and coffee and deviled mutton chops—remembering, as she rigorously devoured her meat, that Durkin had always declared she was carnivorous, protesting that he could tell it by those solid white English teeth of hers!

Then she dressed herself simply, in a white shirt waist and a black cloth skirt, with a black-feathered turban hat draped with a heavy traveling veil. This simple toilet, however, she made with infinite care, realizing that today, as never before, appearances were to count with her.

Then she stepped into a hansom, and, through the clear, cool, autumnal sunlight, drove straight down to the Guilford, an apartment hotel, where Sunset Bryan, the race-track plunger, made his home when in New York.

The Guilford was one of those ultra-ornamented, over-upholstered, upper Broadway hotels, replete with marble and onyx, with plate glass and gilt and outward imperturbability, where a veneer of ceremonial covered the punkwood of affluent license. It was here, Mame knew, that little Myers, the jockey, held forth in state; it was here that an unsavory actress or two made her home; that Upton Banastar, the turfman, held rooms; that Penfield himself had once lived; it was here that the initiated sought and found the court of every gentlemanly blackleg in all New York.

Mame's fingers trembled a little at the office desk as she took out her card and penciled beneath her name: "Representing the *Morning Journal*."

She knew that Sunset Bryan's success on the circuit, his midnight prodigalities, his bewildering lavishness of life and his projected departure for New Orleans had already brought the reporters buzzing about his apartments. Even as she lifted the blotter to dry the line she had written with such craven boldness her eye fell on a well-thumbed card before her bearing the inscription:

ALBERT ERIC SPAULDING

The Sunday Sun

A moment later she had it in her white-gloved hand, with her own card discreetly hidden away, and she was asking the busy clerk behind the desk if she could see Mr. Bryan.

"Mr. Bryan is a very late riser," he explained.

"I know that," she answered coolly, "but he's expecting me, I think."

The clerk looked at her, as he stamped the card, and he continued to look at her studiously and yet quizzically, as a bell-boy led her back to the elevator. Sunset Bryan and the type of men he stood for the puzzled clerk knew well enough; but this type of woman he did not know. Sunset, obviously, was branching out.

"You needn't bother to wait!" she said to the youth who had touched the electric button beside the great, high-paneled door of the apartment.

She stood there quietly until the boy had turned a corner in the hallway; then she boldly opened the door and stepped inside.

The big, many-mirrored, crimson-carpeted room was empty, but from an inner room came the clinking of chopped ice against glass and the hiss of a seltzer siphon. The race-track king was evidently about to take his morning pick-me-up. A heavy odor of stale cigar smoke filled the place. She wondered what the next step would be.

"Hello, there, Allie, old boy!" the gambler's offhand and surprisingly genial bass voice called out, as he heard the door close sharply behind Mame.

That must mean, thought the frightened girl, that Albert Eric Spaulding and the plunger were old friends. Once more the siphon hissed and spat and the ice clinked against the thin glass. Here was a predicament.

"Hello!" answered Mame at last, steeling herself into a careless buoyancy of tone ill suited to the fear-dilated pupils of her eyes.

She heard a muffled but startled "Good God!" echo from the inner room. A moment later the doorway was blocked by the shadow of a huge figure, and she knew that she was being peered at by a pair of small, wolfish eyes, as coldly challenging as they were audacious.

She looked nervously at her gloved hands, and at the little handkerchief she was torturing between her slightly

shaking fingers. Her gloves, she noticed, were stained here and there with perspiration.

If she had not already passed through her chastening ordeal with a certain half-drunk English butler, and if the shock of that untoward experience had not in some way benumbed and hardened her shrinking womanhood, she felt that she would have screamed aloud and then incontinently fled. It flashed through her, with the lightning-like rapidity of thought at such moments, that for all her dubiously honest career she had been strangely sheltered from the coarser brutalities of life. She had always shrunk from the unclean and the unlovely. If she had not always been honest, she had at least always been honorable. Durkin, from the first, had recognized and respected this inner and better side of her beating so forlornly and so ineffectually against the bars of actuality; and it was this half-hidden fineness of fibre in him, she told herself, that had always marked him, to her, as different from other men. But here was a man from whom she could look for no such respect, a corrupt and evil liver whom she had already taunted and challenged with her own show of apparent evilness. So she still tortured her handkerchief and felt the necessity of explaining herself, for the big gambler's roving little eyes were still sizing her up, cold-bloodedly, judicially, terrifyingly.

"You're all right, little girl," he said genially, as his six feet of insolent rotundity came and towered over her. "You're all right! And a dimple in your chin, too, just like Julia Marlowe!"

A new wave of courage seemed pumping through all of the shrinking girl's veins of a sudden, and she looked up at her enemy unwaveringly, smiling a little. Whereupon he smilingly and admiringly pinched her ear, and insisted that she have a John Collins with him.

Again she felt the necessity for talking. Unless the stress of action came

to save her she felt that she would faint.

"I'm a *Morning Journal* reporter," she began hurriedly.

"The devil you are!" he said with a note of disappointment, his wagging head still on one side, in undisguised admiration.

"Yes, I'm from the *Journal*," she began.

"Then how did you get this card?"

"That's a mistake in the office—the clerk must have sent you the wrong one," she answered glibly.

"Come off! Come off! You good-looking women are all after me!" and he pinched her ear again.

"I'm a *Morning Journal* reporter," she found herself rattling on as she stood there quaking in mysterious fear of him, "and we're going to run a story about you being the Monte Cristo of modern circuit-followers, and all that sort of thing. Then we wanted to know if it was true that you copped one hundred and sixty thousand dollars on Africander at Saratoga, and if you would let our photographer get some nice pictures of your rooms here, and a good one of yourself—oh, yes, you would take a splendid picture. And then I wanted to know if it is true that your system is to get two horses that figure up as if they each had a good square chance and then play the longer of the two and put enough on the other for a place to cover your losses if the first one should lose. And our sporting editor, you know, has said that you make that a habit, and that often enough you are able to cash on both, and that you——"

"Say, look here, little girl, what in the devil are you driving at, anyway?"

"I'm a reporter on the *Morning Journal*," she reiterated vacuously, foolishly, passing her hand across her forehead with a weak little gesture of bewilderment.

"Well, it's a shame for a girl like you to get afraid of me this way! Hold on, now, don't butt in! It's not square to use a mouth like that for talking—I'd rather see it laughing, any day. So just cool down and tell

me, honest and out-and-out, what it is you're after."

She flung herself forward and hung on him, in a mad and quite unlooked for paroxysm of weeping and hysteria, reckless of the moment and of the future.

"It's this," she sobbed in a sudden mental obsession, the tears of actual anguish running down her face. "It's this," she went on shrilly, hurriedly. "I've put my money on the Duke of Kendall today—and if he doesn't come in I'm going to kill myself!"

Sunset Bryan let his arm drop from her shoulder in astonishment. Then he stepped back a few paces, studying her face as she mopped it with her moistened handkerchief.

"Why'd you do it?" he demanded.

"Because—because Clara—that's Clara Shirley, his rider's sister—told me the Duke of Kendall was fixed to win on a long shot this afternoon!"

"Now, look here—are you, or are you not, a newspaper woman?"

"No, I'm not," she shrilled out. "I lied, just to get in to see you!"

"And you've put your money on this Duke of Kendall?"

"Every cent I own—every cent! If I lose it—ah— It will kill me to lose it!"

"But what the devil did you come here for?"

"Because I am desperate! I've—I've——"

"Now, don't spoil those lovely eyes with crying this way, honey-girl! What would I get if I told you something about that race this afternoon?"

"Oh, I'd give you anything!" she cried impulsively, snatching some belated hope from the change in his tone.

"Do you mean that?" he demanded suddenly, stepping back and looking at her from under his shaggy brows.

"No—no, not that," she gasped quickly, in terror, for then, and then only, did she understand his meaning. She felt that she had floundered into a quagmire of pollution, and that the more fiercely she struggled and fought, the more stained with its tainted waters she was destined to remain.

She was afraid to look up at the crafty, sunburnt, animal-like face before her, with its wrinkles about the heavy line of the mouth and in the corners of the shrewd and squinting eyes.

She felt that the very air of life was being walled and held away from her. Still another fierce longing for escape took hold of her, and she shuddered a little as she fought and battled against it. She seemed without the strength to speak, and could only shake her head and try not to shrink away from him.

"Still afraid of me, eh?" he asked as he lifted her drooping head brazenly with his forefinger under her chin. He studied her tear-stained, colorless face for a minute or two, and then he went on:

"Well, I'm not so rotten as I might be! Here's a tip for you, little girl! The Duke of Kendall *is* goin' to come in on a long shot, and what's more, he's goin' to run on odds of fifty to one!"

"You're certain of it?" she gasped.

"Dead sure of it, between you and me! There's a gang down at the Rossmore'd cover this floor with gold just to know that tip!"

"Then we *can* win! It's *not* too late!" she broke out fervently, forgetting the man before her. She was already reaching up to draw down her veil, with a glance over her shoulder at the door.

"Am I goin' to see you again?" he still wheedled.

Again their eyes met. She had to struggle desperately to keep down the inward horror of it all.

"Yes," she murmured.

"When?" he demanded.

"I'll come back—tomorrow!"

She already had her hand on the door-handle when he called to her sharply.

"Here, wait one minute!"

She paused, in some deadly new fear of him.

"Look here, little girl, I began to follow this business of mine when I was nineteen years old. I'm forty-

three now, and in those twenty-four years I've hauled in a heap of money. Are you listening?"

"Yes," she murmured.

"What I haven't made by plunging I've made by poker. And I'd never have come out the long end if I didn't know a thing or two about faces. I know a bluff when I see it. Now I want to tell you something."

"Well?" she faltered.

"You're *not* coming back tomorrow! You're not comin' back at all, my pink-and-white beauty! I'm tellin' you this for two reasons. One is that I don't want you to carry off the idea that you've been breakin' me all up, and the other is that I'm not so rotten bad as—well, as Bob Pinkerton would try to make me out. That's all."

"Good-bye!" murmured the humbled woman from the doorway.

"Good-bye, and good luck!" answered Sunset Bryan in his genial bass.

VIII

FOR all the rest of that day Mabel Candler hated herself, hated Durkin for the mean and despicable paths into which he and his plottings had forced her, hated even her sordid and humiliating conquest of the gambler Bryan and his secret.

But most of all she hated what she saw was happening within herself, the insidious and yet implacable hardening and narrowing of all her nature, the accumulating of bemeaning and corroding memories, the ripening of a more and more morose self-contempt into a sullen malevolence of thought and wish.

She told herself, forlornly, that she still would not let her better nature die without a struggle, for all that she had done, and for all that she had been through. What crushed and disheartened her was the conviction that this struggle would once more, in the end, prove a futile one. She was not bad, though, all bad, like women she

had known! She had always aspired and turned toward what was right and good—her spirit cried out desolately. It was not that she had gained anything through all her wrong-doing. From the first, she felt, she had been the tool in some stronger hand; she had been only the leaf on the winds of some darker destiny. At first it had been to live, and nothing more. Now it was to love—only some day to love as she had always hoped to do; not at once to win that crown, but some day to hope to be able to win that crown, for this she was surrendering her womanhood, her integrity of soul, even the last shred of her tattered self-respect.

She would not die in a day, she told herself again, desperately. She would not surrender everything without a struggle. What remained of her scattered legions of honor, she passionately promised herself, would still be gathered together and fostered and guarded.

Above all things she needed companionship. Durkin meant much to her—meant far too much to her, for time and time again he had only too easily shattered her card-house of good resolutions. She had blindly submerged herself for him and his efforts. It was not that she stopped to blame or reprove him—her feeling was more one of pity, of sorrow for the unstable and unreconciled nature in the fell clutch of circumstances. Yes, he meant more to her than she dare tell herself. But there were moods and moments when he proved inadequate. If she had, or could have, the friendship of women, the comradeship of one warm woman quick to understand another, she vaguely felt that things might not yet be so ill with her.

But she knew of none. There was no one, she felt, to whom she could turn. And she tried to console herself with the bitter unction of the claim that with her the world had always been unkind and cruel.

This maddening feeling of self-hate and contempt stayed with her all that day. It made stiflingly hideous and

sinister, to her brooding eyes, the over-furnished woman's poolroom which had once been Penfield's own, where she counted out her money and placed her bet on the Duke of Kendall. The broken-spirited and hard-faced women who waited about the operator's wicket, the barrenness and malignity of their lives, the vainly muffled squalidness of that office of envenomed Chance, the empty and hungry eyes that waited and watched the figure-covered blackboard, the wolf-like ears that pricked up at the report of some belated prey in the distance—it all filled Mame with a new and disheartening hatred of herself and the life into which she had drifted.

"Oh, God!" she prayed silently, yet passionately, while the little sounder in the operator's stall clicked and sang; "oh, God, may it turn out that this shall be the last!"

Listlessly she read the messages, as the report for the fifth Aqueduct event of the afternoon began to flash in and the announcer cried out, "They're off!" Dreamily she interpreted the snatches of information as they came in: "Scotch Heather leads, with White-Legs second!" "Scotch Heather still leading at the quarter, and Heart's Desire pressing White-Legs close." "Heart's Desire leads at the half, with the Duke of Kendall second." "White-Legs, the Duke of Kendall and Heart's Desire bunched at the turn." "Duke of Kendall holds the rail, with Heart's Desire and White-Legs locked for second place." Then, for a minute or two, silence took possession of the little brass sounder. Then thrilled out the news: "The Duke of Kendall wins!"

Mame quietly waited, amid the hubbub and crowding and commotion, until the wire report had been duly verified and the full returns posted.

Then, when the little window of the paying clerk slid open for the making of settlements, she deposited her ticket and asked to have it in hundreds.

Her slip read for two hundred dollars on the Duke of Kendall at odds of fifty to one.

"I guess this shop shuts up soon on

this kind of runnin'," said the paying clerk sourly, as he flung her money through his little wicket at her. She counted it methodically, amid the gasps and little envious murmurs of the women at her elbow, and then hurried from the room.

"Well, *you* ought to be happier-looking!" snarled a painted woman with solitaire diamond earrings as Mame hurried down the half-lighted stairway to the street.

There the woman who ought to be happy signaled for a hansom and drove straight to Durkin's apartments.

She flung the pile of bills at him in a heap before his astonished eyes.

"There it is," she said, with shaking hands and quivering lips, flashing at him a look in which he could see hatred, contempt, self-disgust and infinite unhappiness.

"There it is!" she screamed at him shrilly. "There it is—all you wanted, at last, and I hope it will make you happy!"

She tore the veil she had dragged from her head between her two distraught hands and flung it from her, and then fell in the other's arms and wept on his shoulder like a tired child, convulsively, bitterly, hopelessly.

IX

"HELEN cannot possibly sail tomorrow."

This was the cipher message which flashed from Samuel Curry to his New Orleans partner, giving him hurried warning that the final movement in their cotton *coup* had been again postponed for at least another twenty-four hours. Mabel Candler, keeping watch on the uptown wires, had caught the first inkling of this relieving news. After a passionate hour of talk and pleading from Durkin, and after twelve long hours of unbroken sleep, much of her spirit of rebelliousness had passed away and she had unwillingly and listlessly taken up the threads of what seemed her sadly tangled duty once more.

But with the advent of Curry's climactic message her old, more intimate interest in the game awoke. By daylight she had sent word down to Durkin, who, about that time, was having quite trouble enough of his own.

For this underground guerrilla work, as it was called, had its risks in even the remoter parts of the city. But here, in the Wall Street district, by day the most carefully guarded area of all New York, just as by night the Tenderloin is the most watched—here, with hundreds hourly passing to and fro and Central Office men buzzing back and forth, Durkin knew there were unusual perils and need for unusual care.

Yet early that morning, under the very eyes of a patrolman, he had casually and hummingly entered the Postal Union conduit, by way of the manhole not sixty yards from Broadway itself. In his hands he carried his instruments and a bag of tools, and he nodded with businesslike geniality as the patrolman stepped over toward him.

"Got a guard to stand round this manhole?" demanded the officer.

"Nope!" said Durkin. "Three minutes down here ought to do me!"

"You people are gettin' kind of careless about these things," rebuked the officer. "It's *me* gets the blame, of course, when a horse sticks his foot in there!"

"Oh, cover the hole, then!" retorted Durkin genially, as he let himself down.

Once safely in the covered gloom of the conduit, he turned on his light and studied a hurriedly made chart of the subway wire-disposition. The leased Curry wires, he very well knew, were already in active service; and the task before him was not unlike the difficult and dangerous operation of a surgeon. Having located and cut open his cables, and in so doing exposed the busy arteries of most of Wall Street's brokerage business, he carefully adjusted his rheostat, throwing the resistance coils into circuit one by one as he turned the graduated pointer. It was essential that he should remain on a higher resistance than the circuit into which he

was cutting; in other words, he must not bleed his patient too much, for either a heavy leakage or an accidental short-circuiting, he knew, would lead to suspicion and an examination, if not a prompt reversal to the protection of some distant and indirect wire.

When his current had been nicely adjusted and his sensitive little polarized relay had broken into a fit of busy and animated chattering, he turned his attention to the unused and rusted end of gas-pipe which careless workmen, months and months or even years before, had hurriedly capped and left protruding a good half-inch into the conduit. On this cap he adjusted a pair of pocket pipe-tongues. It took all his weight to start the rusted pipe-head, but once loosened, it was only a minute's work to unscrew the bit of metal and expose the waiting ends of the wires which he had already worked through from the basement end of the pipe. He then proceeded with great deliberation and caution to make his final connections, taking care to cover his footsteps as he went, concealing his wire where possible, and leaving, wherever convenient, no trace of interference.

When everything was completed, it was nothing more than an incision made by a skilled and artful surgeon, a surgeon who had as carefully dressed the wound, and had left only a slender drainage tube to show how deep the cutting had been.

Durkin then repacked his tools in his spacious, double-barreled club bag of black sea-lion, put out his light, emerged whistling and dirt-soiled from his manhole, and having rounded the block, slipped into his basement printing office and changed his clothes.

What most amazed and impressed Durkin, when once his quadruplex had been adjusted and pressed into service, was the infinite carefulness and precision with which the Curry campaign had been prearranged. This Napoleonic operator's private wires were humming with messages, deputies throughout the country were standing at his beck and call, waiting

to snatch up the crumbs which fell from his overloaded board, his corps of clerks were toiling away as feverishly as ever, Chicago and St. Louis and Memphis and New Orleans were being thrown into a fever of excitement and foreboding, fortunes were being wrested away in Liverpool, the Lancaster mills were shutting down, and still cotton was going up, up, point by point; timid clerks and messenger boys and widows, even, were pouring their pennies and dollars into the narrowing trench which separated them from twenty-cent cotton and fortune. Yet only two men knew and understood just how this Napoleon of commerce was to abandon and leave to its own blind fate this great, uncomprehending and maddened army of followers. Speculators who had made their first money in following at his heels were putting not only all their winnings, but their original capital as well, on the "long" side of the great bull movement, waiting for the *Fata Morgana* of twenty-cent cotton. However, this bull leader, Durkin felt, was infinitely wiser and craftier than those he led. Curry knew and saw the utter hopelessness of his cause; he realized that he was grandiloquently trifling with a great current that in the end, when its moment came, would sweep him and his followers away like chips. He faced and foresaw this calamity, and out of the calamity he quietly prepared to reap his harvest.

As these thoughts ran through Durkin's busy mind, some vague idea of the power which reposed in his knowledge of how great the current was to turn came to him. Properly equipped, millions lay before him. But the strain of illegitimacy clung to his methods, and as it was, his returns at the best could be only a paltry few thousand—fifty or sixty or even a hundred thousand at most; with Curry it would be millions.

Then he remembered his frugal train-despatching days at the barren little wooden station at Komoka Junction, where forty dollars a month had seemed a fortune to him. He lighted

a Carolina perfecto, and inhaled it slowly and deliberately, and demanded to know why he ought not to be satisfied with himself. In those earlier days he used to eat his dinner out of a tin pail, carried each morning from his bald and squalid boarding-house. Today, he remembered, he was to take luncheon with Mame at the Casa Napoleon, with its exquisite Franco-Spanish cookery, its tubbed palms, and its general air of exotic well-being.

His luncheon with Mame, however, was not what he had looked for. He met her in front of the West Ninth street restaurant as she was stepping out of her motor cab. She seemed unusually pale and worried, though an honestly happy smile flitted across her lightly veiled face as she caught sight of him.

In a moment again her manner changed.

"We are being watched," she said, in a low voice.

"Watched! By whom?"

Their eyes met, and he could see the alarm that had taken possession of her.

"By MacNutt!"

Durkin himself grew a little paler as he looked down at her.

"He has shadowed us for two days," she went on in her tense, low, quick tones. "He followed me out of our own building, and I got away from him only by leaving my hansom and slipping through a department store."

"Did he speak to you?"

"No, not a word. I don't even think he dreams I have seen him. But it is hard to say how much he has found out. Oh, Jim, he's cold and sly and cunning, and he won't strike until the last minute. But when he does, he will try to—to smash us both!"

"I'll kill that man as sure as I'm standing on this curbstone, if he ever butts in on this game of ours! This isn't poolroom piking we're at now, Mame—this is big and dangerous business!"

He had remembered the cigar-light in the dark passageway, and the mysterious disappearance, and then

later the hansom that had strangely followed his own.

"No, no, Jim; you mustn't say that!" Mame was murmuring to him, with a little shiver. "I'm afraid of him!"

"Well, *I'm* not," said Durkin, and he swore softly and wickedly, as he repeated his threat. "What does *he* want to come into our lives for, now? He's over and done with long ago!"

"We are never over and done with anything we have been," she almost sobbed, half tragically.

Durkin looked at her, a little impatient, and also a little puzzled.

"Mame, what is, or whatever has been, this man MacNutt to you?"

"He is a cruel and cunning and bitterly vindictive man," she said, evading the question. "And if he determined to crush a person, he would do it, although it took him twenty years."

"Then I certainly *shall* kill him!" declared Durkin, shaken with a sudden unreasoning sweep of white passion.

It was not until he had half finished his luncheon that his steadiness of nerve came back to him. Mame pleaded with him not to drink so much, but for once he seemed to find solace in a second bottle of Château Yquem. Here he had been shadowing the shadower, step by step and move by move, and all along, even in those moments when he had taken such delight in covertly and unsuspectingly watching his quarry, a second shadow had been secretly and cunningly stalking his own steps!

"It will be a fight to the finish, whatever happens!" he declared, still harping on the string of his new unhappiness.

X

DURKIN, bending restlessly over his relay, and dreamily cogitating on the newly discovered fact that Morse was a language as harmonious and mysterious and subtly expressive as music itself, sat up with a sudden galvanic jerk of the body.

"*Helen sails at one tomorrow!*"

trilled and warbled and sang the little machine of dots and dashes; and the listening operator knew that his time had come. He caught up the wires that ran through the gas-pipe to the conduit, and bracing himself against the basement wall, pulled with all his strength. They parted suddenly, somewhere near the cables, and sent him sprawling noisily over the floor.

He hurriedly picked himself up, flung every tool and instrument that remained in the dingy basement into his capacious club bag, and carefully coiled and wrapped every foot of tell-tale wire. As little evidence as possible, he decided, should remain behind him. Then he made his escape to the street, after cautiously locking his door behind him.

Five minutes later he stepped into Robinson & Little's brokerage offices. It was, in fact, just as the senior member of the firm was slipping off his light covert-cloth overcoat and making ready for a feverish day's business.

Ezra Robinson stared a little hard when Durkin told him that he had thirteen thousand dollars to throw into "short" cotton that morning and asked on what margin he would be able to do business.

"Well," answered the broker, with his curt laugh, "it's only on the buying side that we're demanding five dollars a bale, this morning!"

He looked at Durkin sharply. "You're on the wrong side of the market, young man!" he warned him.

"Perhaps," said Durkin easily. "But I'm superstitious!"

The man of business eyed him almost impatiently.

"I mean I had a regular Joseph's dream that cotton was going to break down to sixteen today!"

"Well, you can't afford to work on dreams. Cotton goes up to nineteen today, and stays there. Candidly, I'd advise you to keep off the bear side—for a month or two anyway!"

But Durkin was not open to dissuasion.

"When May drops down to sixteen or so I'll be ready to let the 'shorts'

start to cover!" he argued mildly, as he placed his money, gave his instructions, and carried away his all-important little slip of paper.

Then he hurried out, and dodged and twisted and ran through those crowded and sunless cañons of business where only a narrow strip of earth's high-arching sky showed overhead. As he turned from William street into Hanover Square, through the second tier of half-opened plate glass windows he could already hear the dull roar of the cotton pit. The grim day's business, he knew, was already under way.

Four policemen guarded the elevators leading to the spectators' gallery. The place was crowded to the doors; no more were to be admitted. Durkin, however, pushed resolutely through the staggering mass, and elbowed his way slowly up the stairs. Here again another row of guards confronted him.

"No use, mister, we can't let you in," said a perspiring officer.

He stood with his back to the closed door. At each entrance a fellow-officer stood in the same position.

"Hey, stand back there! Let 'em out! Here's a woman fainted!" came the cry from within, and the doors were swung wide to allow the woman to be carried through.

Durkin wedged a five-dollar bill down between the guarding policeman's fingers.

"There's your chance. For God's sake, get me in!"

The doors were already being closed, and the din within shut off from the listening crowd in the hallway.

"Here, stand back! Gentleman's got a ticket!" and without further ado the big officer cannonaded him into the midst of the gallery mob.

Once there, Durkin edged round by the wall, and squeezed himself unceremoniously out, until, at last, he came to the brass railing guarding the edge of the spectators' gallery. Then he took a deep breath, and gazed down at the sea of commotion that boiled and eddied at his feet.

It was one mad tumult of contend-

ing forces, a maelstrom of opposing currents. Seldom was there a lull in that hundred-throated delirium, where, on raised steps about a little circular brass railing, men shouted and danced and flung up their hands and raced back and forth through a swarming beehive of cotton-hunger. Some were hatless, some had thrown coats and vests open, some white as paper and some red and perspiring, some were snowing handfuls of torn-up pad sheets over their comrades, some were penciling madly in call-books, some were feverishly handing slips to agile youths dodging in and out through the seething mass. Every now and then a loud-noted signal-bell sounded from one end of the hall, calling a messenger boy for despatches.

In the momentary little lulls of that human tempest Durkin could catch the familiar pithy staccato of the telegraph keys clattering and pulsating with their hurried orders and news. He could see the operators, where they sat, apathetically pounding the brass, as unmoved as the youth at the light-crowned, red-lined blackboard, who caught up the different slips handed to him and methodically chalked down the calls under the various months.

Then the tumult began afresh once more, and through it all Durkin could hear the deep, bass, bull-like chest-notes of one trader rising loud above all the others, answered from time to time by the clear, high, penetratingly insistent soprano of another.

Curry once more had cotton on the upward move! It was rumored that the ginners' report was to be a sensational one. Despatches from Southern points had shown advancing prices for spot cotton. A weak point had been found in the Government report. The mills, it had been whispered about, were still buying freely, eagerly; yet already purchasers were having more difficulty in getting the commodity than when, weeks before, it had stood two hundred points lower. And still the sea of faces fought and howled and seethed, but still the price of cotton went up.

Durkin searched more carefully through that writhing mass of frenzied speculators for a glimpse of Curry himself.

He caught sight of him, at last, standing cool and collected and rosy-faced, a few paces in front of the New Orleans blackboard, at the edge of the little sea of frantic men that fought and surged and battled at his side. Spot cotton had already soared to 17.55. The wires were reporting it at eighteen cents in New Orleans. Hurry orders from Liverpool were increasing the tension.

Durkin took a second and closer look at the great bull leader. He made note of the large emerald flashing in his purple cravat, of the gaily dotted white waistcoat in the armholes of which were jauntily caught the careless thumbs, of the black derby hat tilted a trifle down over the careless, rosy face. This was the man who was so lavishly giving away houses and jewels and automobiles. This was the man on whom men and women in all walks of life, in every state and territory of the Union, were pinning their faith for established twenty-cent cotton and the balm of affluence that it would bring them! This was the man at whose whisper a hundred thousand spindles had ceased to revolve, and at whose nod, in cotton towns half a world away, a thousand families either labored or were idle, had food or went hungry.

A momentary lull came in the storm, a nervous spasm of uncertainty. It seemed only a sheer caprice, but in sixty seconds the overstrained price had fallen away again twenty points. Curry, stroking his small mustache, stepped in closer to the circular brass railing of the Pit, and said a quiet word or two to his head-broker. His rosy face was expressionless, and he pulled languidly at his little mustache once more. But his motion had started the passionate upward tendency again. Both May and July cotton bounded up, point by point, unreasonably, capriciously, implacably, as though at the wafting of a magician's wand.

When the excitement seemed at its

highest, when the shrill-noted chorus of sellers and buyers was shrieking its loudest, Samuel Curry went out to eat his luncheon. This was at once noticed and commented on—for dozens of eyes, both eager and haggard, watched the leader's every move and expression.

The change that swept over the Pit was magical. The tumult subsided. The shouting men about the brass railing stopped to take breath. The sal-low-faced young man who chalked prices up on the Pit-edge blackboard rested his tired fingers. Brokers sat about on little campstools. For the first time Durkin could catch the sound of the sustained note of the telegraph keys clicking busily away. The sun-light fell across the paper-littered floor. The crowd in the gallery grew less. The operators were joking and chatting. A messenger boy had fallen asleep on his bench. The army was waiting for the return of its leader.

Curry re-entered the Pit quietly, with a toothpick in one corner of his mouth. He stood there for a moment or two, his thumbs in his waistcoat armholes, rocking comfortably back and forth on his heels, enigmatically and indolently watching the floor, which his reappearance had thrown into sudden confusion.

Durkin, in turn, watched the leader closely, breathlessly, waiting for the beginning of the end. He saw Curry suddenly throw away his toothpick and signal to a bent and pale-haired floor broker, who shot over to his leader's side, exchanged a whispered word or two with him, and then shot back to the brass railing. There he flung his hands up in the air, with fingers outthrust, and yelled like a madman:

"Buy July fifty-one! Buy July fifty-two! Buy July fifty-three—four—five! Buy July fifty-six!"

With arms still extended and gaunt fingers outstretched he kept it up, imparting his madness to the men who screamed and fought and gesticulated about him.

"Buy July sixty-three! Buy July

sixty-four! Buy July sixty-five—sixty-seven—sixty-eight!"

The frenzy in the Pit increased. Up, up went July cotton to seventy, to seventy-one, even to seventy-two. In thirty years and over no such price had ever been known. Eighty-five million dollars' worth of cotton bales, on paper, were deliriously exchanging hands. But the bow had been bent to the uttermost. The tide had flooded in to its highest point.

A sudden change came over Curry. He flung up his two hands, and brought them smartly together over his jauntily tilted black derby. This done, he elbowed and pushed his way hurriedly to the ringside. The market hung on his next breath.

"Sell twenty thousand May at sixty!"

The leader was unloading! It was rumored that five thousand bales more than the whole crop had been sold. The bubble had been overblown. There was still time to be on the safe side.

But the downward trend had already begun.

Everybody attempted to unload. Outside orders to follow the movement poured in. What before had been unrest was soon panic, and then pandemonium.

Wire houses promptly learned of the unloading movement, of the abdication of the bull king, and a mad stream of selling orders added to the rout of the day.

Curry had started the current; he let it take its course. Through its own great volume he knew it could easily carry all opposition down with it. He even ostentatiously drew on his tan-colored gloves and took up his overcoat, as he announced, laughingly, that he was out of the market, and that he was off to Florida for a holiday.

Then panic—frenzied, irrational, desperate, self-destroying panic—took hold of that leaderless mob trampling out their last hope with their own feverish feet. Curry had liquidated his entire holdings! He was going South for the winter! He was carrying out his old

threat to take the bears by the neck! He had caught the pool on the eve of betraying him!

They had warned him that he would find no mercy if he did not draw in with his manipulations. He had found treachery used against him, and as he had promised, he was giving them a dose of their own medicine.

July, in the mad rush, dropped fifty points, then a ruinous one hundred more, then wilted and withered down another fifty, until it stood 173 points below its high quotation mark. The rout was absolute and complete.

Seeing, of a sudden, that the market might even go utterly to pieces, without hope of redemption, the old-time bull leader, now with a pallor on his plump face, leaped into the Pit, and tried to hold the runaway forces within bounds.

But his voice was lost in the din and tumult. He was a mere cork on the grim tide of disaster. Even his own frantic efforts were in vain. The *coup* had been effected. The day had been won and lost!

Durkin did not wait for the gong to sound. He hurried round to Robinson & Little's offices, racing past disheveled men as excited as himself.

Neither member of the distraught firm of Robinson & Little was to be seen. But a senior clerk, with a pale face and a wilted collar, quickly and nonchalantly counted Durkin out his money, after verifying the slip.

When his brokerage commission had been deducted, Durkin was still able to claim as his own some forty-eight thousand dollars.

It had been a game, for once, worth the candle.

He walked out into the afternoon sunlight, pausing a moment at the doorway to drink in the clear autumnal air of the open street. After all, it was worth while to be alive in such a world, with all its stir, with all its—

His line of thought was suddenly disrupted. A tingle of apprehension, minute but immediate, was speeding up and down his backbone.

"That's your man," a voice had said from the shadow of the doorway.

Durkin took the two stone steps as one, and without turning hurried on. His eyes were half closed as he went, counting his own quick footfalls and wondering how many of them might safely be taken to mean escape.

He walked blindly, with no sense of direction, each moment demanding of himself if it meant defeat or freedom.

At the twentieth step he felt a hand catch at the slack in his coat sleeve. He jerked a startled and indignant arm forward, but the clutch was one of steel.

"I guess we want you, Jimmie Durkin," said a grim but genial and altogether commonplace voice to him over his averted shoulder.

Then Durkin turned. It was Doogan's plain-clothes man, O'Reilly. Beside him stood a second plain-clothes man showing a corner of his Detective Bureau badge.

"For God's sake, boys, whatever it is, don't make a scene here!" said Durkin passionately. "I'll go easy enough, but don't make a show of me!"

"Come on, then, quick!" said the Central Office plain-clothes man, wheeling him about and heading for the Old Slip station.

"Quick as you like," laughed Durkin, very easily but very warily, as he realized that he was indeed under arrest.

XI

DURKIN, with an officer at either elbow, tried to think far ahead and fast. Yet try as he might, his desperate mind could find no crevice in the blind wall of his predicament. Nothing, at any rate, was to be lost by talking.

"What's this for, boys, anyway?" he asked them.

"Different things," said Doogan's man, O'Reilly, noncommittally.

"But who made the charge? Who laid the complaint, I mean?"

"'Tis an old friend of yours!" chuckled O'Reilly.

Durkin looked at the man studiously.
"Not Robinson?"

"Guess again!"

"Nor the Postal Union people?"

"And what have you been doin' to them?" retorted the officer, as he gnawed at the corner of his tobacco plug and tucked it away in his vest-pocket again.

Durkin's hopes rose. After all, he felt, it might be only some old, unhappy, far-off thing.

"Who the devil was it, then?"

"'Twas MacNutt!" said O'Reilly, watching him. "MacNutt's turned good. He's a stool-pigeon now!"

"MacNutt!" echoed Durkin, and as before, a great rage burned through him at the sound of the very name.

Hope withered out of him, but he gave no sign. He wondered what, or just how much, MacNutt dare reveal, even though he did stand in with the Central Office.

It was a dark minute or two for him, as his mind still leaped and groped at the old blind wall. Then suddenly into the depths of his despair swayed and stretched a single slender thread of hope.

It was Custom House Charley's saloon. There the second bartender was Eddie Crawford—the same Eddie Crawford who had worked with him on the Aqueduct poolroom plot, and had been discharged with him from the Postal Union.

It seemed eons and eons ago, that poor little ill-fated plot with Eddie Crawford!

Eddie had struggled forlornly on as an inspector of saloon stock-tickers, had presided over a lunch counter, and had even polished rails and wiped glasses. But now he mixed drinks and drew beer for Custom House Charley.

If Eddie was there——

"Look here, you two," cried Durkin decisively, coming to a full stop to gain time. "I've struck it heavy and honest this time, and, as you people put it, I've got the goods on me. I can make it worth five thousand in spot cash to each of you, just to let this thing drop while you've still got the chance!"

The Central Office man looked at O'Reilly. Durkin saw the look, and understood it. One of them, at any rate, if it came to the pinch, could be bought off. But O'Reilly was different. "Look here, you two," said Durkin, showing the fringe of his neatly banded packet of notes.

The Central Office man whistled under his breath. But O'Reilly seemed obdurate.

"Double that, young man, and then double it again, and maybe I'll talk to you," Doogan's detective said easily, as he started on again with his prisoner.

"And if I did?" demanded Durkin.

"Talk's cheap, young fellow! You know what they're doing to us boys, nowadays, for neglect of duty? Well, I've got to get up against more than talk before I run that risk!"

"By heaven, I can do it—and I will!" said Durkin.

O'Reilly wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. The prisoner could feel the two officers silently interrogating each other.

"Step in here, then, before you're spotted with me," said Durkin. "Come in, just as though we were three friends buying a drink, and shoot me if I make a move to break away!"

"You'll not break away!" said the man with the steel grip confidently, still keeping his great handful of loose coat sleeve. But he stepped inside the barroom, none the less.

Durkin's heart leaped into his mouth with joy. There stood Eddie Crawford, leisurely peeling a lemon, with his lips pursed in a whistle. One hungry broker was taking a hurried and belated free lunch from the cheese-and-cracker end of his counter.

Durkin stared at his old friend with a blank and forbidding face. Not a sign of recognition passed between them.

"What will you have, gentlemen?" said Durkin easily, briskly.

"Highball," said the officer on his right.

"Give me a gin rickey," said the officer on his left.

"A silver fizz," added Durkin, between them.

That, he knew, would take a little time to mix. Then there came a moment of silence.

Durkin's long, thin fingers were drumming anxiously and restlessly on the polished wood of the mahogany bar.

The busy bartender, with a nervous little up-jerk of the head, gave these restlessly tapping fingers a passing glance. Then he bent down over his glass, for he was mixing the silver fizz first.

It was the telegrapher's double "I" that he had heard repeated and repeated by those carelessly tapping fingers, and he knew that it meant "attention."

Yet he worked away, impassive, unmoved, while with his slender little sugar-spoon he signaled back his answer, on the rim of his mixing-glass.

"Get a move on, boss," said O'Reilly impatiently.

"Sure," said the bartender abstractedly, quite unruffled, for his ear was a little out of practice, and he wanted to make sure just what those finger-nails tapping on the mahogany meant.

And this is what he read:

"Five hundred dollars, spot cash, for a knock-out drop to each of these two!"

"Too expensive," answered the sugar-spoon on the tumbler, as it stirred the mixture; "I'd have to migrate."

"Then make it a thousand," answered the mahogany. "I'm pinched."

"Done!" said the spoon, as the silver fizz was put down on the bar. Then came the gin rickey and the highball.

"They'll get it strong!" drummed the idle bartender on a beer faucet.

A moment later the three glasses stood before Durkin and his guardians.

"Well, here's to you," cried the prisoner, as he gulped down his drink. Then he wiped his mouth, slowly and thoughtfully, and waited.

"Ah, here's a table in the corner," he said at last meaningly. "Suppose I count out that race-money that's coming to you?"

The three men moved over to the table, and sat down. Durkin had never seen chloral hydrate take effect, and Eddie Crawford realized that his friend was foolishly preparing to kill time.

"Here, boss, don't you go to sleep in here," howled the irate bartender, for already the Central Office man was showing signs of bodily distress.

Even the broker was gazing with wondering eyes at the two lolling figures. Then, having satisfied both his hunger and his curiosity, the frugal luncher hurried away.

The hand of steel dropped from Durkin's coat sleeve.

"I'm queer," murmured O'Reilly brokenly, as he sagged back in his chair. Durkin said nothing. He was watching the whitening faces, the quivering eyelids, the slowly stiffening limbs.

"My God, Eddie, you haven't killed them?" he cried, as he turned to hand over his fee.

Eddie laughed unconcernedly.

"They'll be dead enough till we get out of this, anyway!" he said, already taking off his apron and drawing down a window-curtain in front of the table in the corner.

"What's that for?" demanded Durkin nervously as the bartender dodged around to the telephone booth.

"Why, I've got to 'phone over to the boss to get in here and 'tend to his business. You don't suppose I can afford to stay in this town now, with a man like O'Reilly after me!"

"But what can they do?" demanded Durkin, as he looked down at the collapsed figures.

"Oh, they daren't peach out and out, seeing that they were in after graft, and we could show 'em up for neglect of duty. But they'd just hound me and keep after me and make life kind o' miserable. Besides that, I always wanted to see St. Louis, anyway!"

The swing doors opened as he spoke and Custom House Charley himself hurried in.

"I've got to climb out for a few min-

utes, Charley, with a friend o' mine here," said his assistant, as he pulled on his coat.

He turned back at the swing door.

"You'd better put those two jags out before they get messin' things up," he suggested easily, as he held the door for Durkin.

A moment later the two men were out in the street, swallowed up in the afternoon crowds swarming to ferries and Elevated stations, as free as the stenographers and clerks at their elbows.

Durkin wondered, as he hurried on with a glance at the passing faces, if they, too, had their underground trials and triumphs. He wondered if they, too, had explored some portion of that secret network of crime and excitement and daring which ran like turgid sewers under the asphalted tranquillity of the open city.

There was neither sign nor token, in the faces of the citied throng that brushed past him, to show that any of life's more tumultuous emotions and movements had touched their lives. It was only as he passed a newsboy with his armful of flaring headlines and a uniformed officer, suggestive of the motley harvest of a morning police court, that once more he fully realized how life still held its tumult and romance, though it was the order of modern existence that such things should be hidden and subterranean. It was only now and then, Durkin told himself, through some sudden little explosion in the press or through the steaming manhole of the city magistrate's court, that these turgid and often undreamed of sewers showed themselves.

After all, he maintained to himself, life had not changed so much!

XII

DURKIN'S first feeling, incongruously enough, once he was out in the open air, was a ravenous sense of hunger. Through all that busy day his only meal had been a hasty and half-eaten breakfast.

His second thought was at once both to submerge and sustain himself in one of those Broadway basement restaurants where men perch on stools and gulp down meals over a counter.

Then he thought of Mame, of her anxiety, of her long waiting, and he tried to tell himself, valiantly enough, that another hour would make little difference, and that they would take their dinner in state and at their ease at the Beaux-Arts or the Waldorf or perhaps even at Sherry's.

The thought of her gave a sudden, warm glow to the gray flatness of life, born of his hunger and weariness. He pictured her, framed in the gloom of the open doorway, in answer to his knock, the slender oval of her face touched with weariness, her shadowy, brooding, violet eyes grown suddenly alert, even her two warm, woman's arms open, like a very nest, to receive and hold him and her motherly young shoulder to shield him. He laughed to himself as he remembered the time that he had described her as the victim of an ingrowing maternal instinct—she had always seemed so ready to nurture and guard and cherish. She was a woman, he said to himself—with a sudden, strange foreboding of he knew not what—who ought to have had children. She was one of those deeper and richer natures, he knew, who would always love love more than she could love men.

"What is electricity?" he had asked her one quiet night, touched into wonder for the familiar miracle, as they bent together over their relay, while an operator five hundred miles away was talking through the darkness. "We live and work and make life tenser with it and do wonders with it, but, after all, who knows what it is?"

He remembered how the great, shadowy eyes had looked into his face. "And what is love?" she had sighed. "We live and die for it, we see it work its terrible wonders; but who can ever tell us what it is?"

Durkin had forgotten both his hunger and his weariness as he mounted the stairs to his uptown apartment, where, he knew, Mame was waiting for

him. He decided, in his playful reaction of mood, to take her by surprise. So he slipped his pass-key silently into the door-lock and was about to fling the door wide when the unexpected sound of voices held him motionless, with his hand still on the knob.

It was Mame herself speaking.

"Oh, Mac, don't come between him and me now! It's all I've got to live for—his love! I need it—I need him!"

"The devil you do!" said a muttered growl.

"Oh, I do! I always wanted the love of an honest man."

"An honest man!" again scoffed the deep bass of the other's voice, with a short little laugh. It was MacNutt who spoke. "An honest man! Then what were you hanging round Sunset Bryan for?"

"Yes, an honest man," went on Mame's voice impetuously; "he is honest in his love for me, and that is all I care! Leave him to me, and I'll give you everything! If it's money you want I'll get you anything—anything in reason! I can still cheat and lie and steal for you, if you like—it was you who taught me how to do that!"

Durkin felt that he could stand no more of it; but still he listened, spell-bound, incapable of action or thought.

"I've got to have money!" agreed MacNutt quietly. "That's true enough!" Then he added insolently, "But I almost feel I'd rather have you!"

"No, no!" moaned the woman, seemingly in mingled horror and fear of him. "Only wait and I'll get you what money I have here—every cent of it! It's in my pocketbook here, in the front room!"

Durkin could hear her short, hard sobs and the swish of her silk underskirt as she fluttered across the bare floor into the other room. He could hear the other's easy, half-deprecating, half-mocking laugh; and at the sound of it all the long-banked, smoldering, self-consuming fires of jealous rage that burned within him seemed to leap and burst into relieving flame. An invisible cord seemed to snap before his

eyes—it might have been within his very brain, for all he knew.

"And now I kill him!" This one idea spun through his mind, the one living wheel in all the deadened machinery of consciousness.

Darting back until he felt the plaster of the narrow hallway behind him, he flung himself madly forward against the door. He kicked with the solid flat of his boot-sole as he came, against the light pine, painted and grained to look like oak.

It crashed in like so much kindling, and a second later, white to the very lips, he was in the room, facing MacNutt.

In his hand he held his five-shooter.

As he faced the man whom he was going to kill it flitted vaguely through his mind that somebody—he could not remember who—had said always to shoot for the stomach—it was the easiest and the surest. He also remembered that his weapon had a rifled barrel, and that the long, twisting bullet would rend and tear and lacerate as it went.

"Before I kill you," he heard himself saying, and the quietness of his voice surprised even his own ears, "before I kill you, I want to know, once for all, just what that woman is to you."

The other man looked vacantly down at the pistol barrel, within six inches of his own gross stomach. Then he looked at his enemy's face. A twitching nerve trembled and fluttered on one side of his temple. Only two claret-colored blotches of color remained on his otherwise ashen face.

"For the love of God, Durkin, don't be a fool!"

MacNutt's fingers were working spasmodically, and his breath began to come wheezily and heavily.

"I'm going to kill you!" repeated Durkin, in the same level monotone. "But what is that woman to you?"

MacNutt was desperately measuring chance and distance. There was not the shadow of escape through struggle.

"It's murder!" he gasped, certain that there was no hope.

He could see Durkin's preparatory jaw-clench.

"You—you wouldn't get mixed up in cold murder like this!" MacNutt half pleaded, hurriedly and huskily, with his eyes now on the other man's. "Why, you'd swing for it, Durkin! You'd go to the chair!"

Durkin uttered a foul name impatiently, and closed out the picture with his shut eyelids as he thrust his right hand forward and down.

He wondered, with lightning-like rapidity of thought, if the blood would stain his hand.

Then he felt a quick bark, and a sudden great spit of pain shot through him.

The gun had exploded, he told himself dreamily, as he staggered to the wall and leaned there weakly, swaying back and forth. But why didn't MacNutt go down? he asked himself unconcernedly, as he watched with dull eyes where a jet of red blood spurted and pumped regularly from somewhere in his own benumbed forearm.

Then he had a thin and far-away vision of Mame, with a smoking revolver in her hand, drifting out from the other room. He seemed to see her floating out like a bird to where his own weapon lay, and catch it up, as MacNutt, or some vague shadow of him, leaped to put a heavy foot on it.

A hundred miles away, seemingly, he heard Mame's voice telling MacNutt to go or she would shoot him there herself, like a dog.

Succeeding this came a sense of falling, and he found something bound tightly round his arm and a new dull and throbbing pain as this something twisted and twisted and grew still tighter on the benumbed flesh. Then he felt the weight of a body leaning on his own, where he lay there, and a hand trying to fondle his face and hair.

"Oh, Jim, Jim!" the thin and far-away voice seemed to be wailing, "oh, Jim, I had to do it! I had to—to save you from yourself! You would have killed him. . . . You would have shot him dead. . . .

And that would be the end of everything. . . . Don't you understand, my beloved own?"

Some heavy gray veil seemed to lift away, and the wounded man opened his eyes and moved uneasily.

"It's only the arm, poor boy . . . but I know it hurts!"

"What is it?" he asked vacantly.

"It's only the arm, and not a bone broken! See, I've stopped the bleeding, and a week or two of quiet somewhere, and it'll be all better! Then—*then you'll sit up and thank God for it!*"

He could hear her voice more distinctly now, and could feel her hands feverishly caressing his face and hair.

"Speak to me, Jim," she pleaded passionately. "You're all I've got—you're all that's left to me in the whole wide world!"

He opened his eyes again, and smiled at her; but it was such a wan and broken smile that a tempest of weeping swept over the woman bending above him. He could feel her hot tears scalding his face.

Then she suddenly drew herself up, rigid and tense, for the sound of heavy footsteps smote on her ear. Durkin heard them, too, in his languid and uncomprehending way, and also heard the authoritative knock that came from the hall door.

He surmised that Mame had opened the splintered door, for in the dim sidelight of the hall gas-jet he could see the flash of metal buttons on the dark blue uniform, and the outline of a patrolman's helmet.

"Anything wrong up here, miss?" the officer was demanding, a little out of breath.

"Dear me, no," answered Mame's voice in meek and plaintive alarm. Then she laughed a little.

"What a consummate actress!" thought the wounded man languidly, as he lay there, bleeding in the darkened room, not twelve paces away from her.

"H'm! Folks downstairs said they heard a pistol-shot up here somewhere!"

"Yes, I know; that was the transom blew shut," she answered glibly. "It nearly frightened the wits out of me, too!" She opened the door wide. "But won't you come in, and make sure?"

The officer looked up at the transom, wagged his head three times sagely, glanced at the lines of the girl's figure with open and undisguised admiration, and said it wasn't worth while. Then he tried to pierce the veil that hung from her hat about her smiling face with still another admiring glance, and sauntered off down the stairs, tapping the baluster with his night-stick as he went.

Mame waited, pantingly, against the doorpost, listened for a second or two, and then crept inside and closed the door after her.

"Thank God!" she gasped fervently, as she tore off her hat and veil once more. "Thank God!"

Then, being only a woman, and weak and hungry and tired, and tried beyond her endurance, she took three half staggering steps toward Durkin, and fell in a faint over his feet.

The door opened and closed softly; and a figure with an ashen face, blotched with claret-color, slunk into the silent room. Night had almost closed in by this time, and having listened for a reassuring second or two, he groped slowly across the bare floor. His trembling hand felt a woman's skirt. Exploring carefully onward, he felt her limp arm, and her face and hair.

Then he came to the figure he was in search of. He ripped open the wet and soggy coat with a deft little pull at the buttons, and thrust a great, hungry hand down into the inside breast-pocket. The exploring fat fingers found what they were in search of, and held the carefully banded packet up to the uncertain light of the window.

There he tested the edges of the crisp parchment of the bank-notes, and then, satisfied, hurriedly thrust them down into his own capacious hip-pocket.

Then he crept to the broken door and listened for a minute or two. At last he opened it cautiously, tiptoed slowly over to the baluster, and turned and closed the door.

As the latch of the shattered lock fell rattling on the floor a sigh quavered through the room. It was a woman's sigh, wavering and weak and freighted with weariness, but one of returning consciousness. For, a minute later, a voice was asking, plaintively and emptily, "Where am I?"

XIII

OFTEN, in looking back on those first terrible, phantasmal days that followed, Mabel Candler wondered how she had lived through them.

Certain disjointed pictures of the first night and day, especially, remained vividly in her memory; unimportant and inconsequential episodes haunted her mind, as graphic and yet as vaguely unrelated as the midday recollection of a nightmare.

One of these memories was the doctor's hurried question as to whether or not she could stand the sight of a little blood. A second memory was Durkin's childlike cry of anguish, as she held the bared arm over the sheet of white oil-cloth, pungent-odored with its disinfectant. Still another memory was that of the rattle of the little blackened bullet on the floor as it dropped from the jaws of the surgical forceps. A more vague and yet a more pleasing memory was the thought that had come to her, when the wound had been washed and dressed and hidden away under its white bandages, and Durkin himself had been made comfortable on the narrow couch, that the worst was then over, that the damage had been repaired, and that a week or two of careful nursing would make everything right again.

In this, however, she was sadly mistaken. She had even thought of shyly slipping away and leaving him to sleep through the night alone, until standing over his bed, she beheld the figure that

had always seemed so well-knit and self-reliant and tireless shaking and trembling in the clutch of an oncoming chill. It seemed to tear her very heart-strings, as she gave him brandy and even flung her own coat and skirt over him, to see him lying there so impotent, so childishly afraid of solitude, so miserably craven, before this unknown enemy of bodily weakness.

As the night advanced the fever that followed on Durkin's chill increased, and from the second leather couch in the back room, where she had flung herself down in utter weariness of nerve and body, Mame could hear him mumbling. Toward morning she awakened suddenly, from an hour of sound sleep, and found Durkin out of bed, fighting at his bedroom mantelpiece, protesting, babblingly, that he had seen a red mouse run under the grate and that at all hazard it must be got out.

She led him back to bed, and during the five days that his fever burned through him she never once gave herself up to the luxury of actual sleep. Often, during the day and night, she would fling herself down on her couch, in a condition of half-torpor, but at the least word or sound from him she was astir again.

Then, as his mind grew clearer, and he came to recognize her once more, her earlier sense of loneliness and half-helpless isolation crept away from her. She even grew to take a secret pleasure in giving him his medicine and milk and tablets, in dressing his wound, day by day, in making his pillow more comfortable, in sending the colored hall-boy out after fruit and flowers for him, and in all those duties which broke down the last paling of reserve between them.

And it was a new and unlooked for phase of Mabel Candler that Durkin slowly grew to comprehend. The constraint and the quietness of everything seemed to have something akin to a spiritualizing effect on each of them; and it was not long before he waited for her coming and going with a sort of childish wistfulness. Her tenderness of speech and touch and

look, her brooding thoughtfulness as she sat beside him, seemed to draw them together more closely than even their old-time most perilous moment had done.

"We're going to be decent now, aren't we, Mame?" he said quietly and joyously one morning.

But there were times when his weakness and stagnation of life and thought gave rise to acute suffering in both of them, times when his imprisonment and his feebleness chafed and galled him. It was agony for her to see him in these passionate outbursts, to be forced to stand helplessly by and behold him unmanned and weeping, and sometimes when his nervous irritability was at its worst, wantonly and recklessly blaspheming at his fate.

This sinfulness of the flesh she set down to the pain which his arm might be giving him and the unrest which came of many days in bed. As he grew stronger, she told herself, he would be his old, generous-minded and manly self once more.

But Durkin gained strength very slowly. A rent day came around, and rather than remind him of it Mame slipped out of a rainy afternoon and pawned her rings to get money for the payment.

It was as she was creeping shame-faced out of the pawnshop that she looked up and caught sight of a passing carriage. It was a flashing little victoria with a lemon-colored body, and in it, beside a woman with lemon-colored hair, sat MacNutt, gloved, silk-hatted and happy-looking.

At first she beheld the two with an indeterminate feeling of relief. Then a hot wave of resentment swept over her as she watched them drive away through the fine mist. A consuming sense of the injustice of it all took possession of her, as her thoughts went back to the day of the theft, and she remembered what a little and passing thing Durkin's money would be to MacNutt, the spender, the prodigal liver, while to her and to Durkin it had meant so much! She knew, too, that he would soon be asking about it; and

this brought a new misery into her life.

It was, indeed, only a day or two later that he said to her:

"Do you know, I'm glad we didn't take that girl's money—the Van Schaick girl, I mean. It was all our own from the first!"

Mame did not answer.

"She was a decent sort of girl, really, wasn't she?" he asked again, once more looking up at her.

"I wish I had a woman like that for a friend," Mame said at last. "Do you know, Jim, it is years and years since I have had a woman friend. Yes, yes, my beloved own, I know I have you, but that is so different."

He nodded his head sorrowfully, and stretched out his hand for hers.

"You're better than all of 'em!" he said fondly.

They were both silent for several minutes.

"We're going to be decent now, aren't we, Mame?" he went on at last, quietly, joyously.

"Yes, Jim, from now on."

"I was just thinking, this town has got to know us a little too well by this time. When we start over we'll have to migrate, I suppose." Then he smiled a little. "We ought to be thankful, Mame, they haven't got us both pinned down by the Bertillon system over at the Central Office!"

"I'd defy Bertillon himself to find you," she laughed, "underneath that two weeks' beard."

He rubbed his hand over his stubbled chin absent-mindedly.

"Where shall we go, when we migrate?" he asked, not unhappily.

She gazed with unseeing eyes through the window, out over the house-tops.

"I know a little English village," she said in her soft, flute-like contralto, "I know a little village, nestling down among green hills, a little town of gardens and ivy and walls and thatches, in a country of brooks and hawthorn hedges—a little village where the nightingales sing at night, and the skylarks sing by day, and the old men and women have rosy faces,

and the girls are shy and soft-spoken—"

"But we'd die of loneliness in that sort of place, wouldn't we?"

"No, Jim, we should get more out of life than you dream. Then, in the winter, we could slip over to Paris and the Riviera, or down to Rome—it can be done cheaply, if one knows how—and before you realized it you would be used to the quiet and the change, and learn to like it."

"Yes," he said wearily. "I've had too much of this wear-and-tear life—even though it *has* its thrill now and then. It's intoxicating enough, but we've both had too much of this drinking wine out of a skull. Even at the best it's only feasting on a coffin-lid, isn't it?"

She was still gazing out of the window with unseeing eyes.

"And there is so much to read, and study, and learn," Durkin himself went on more eagerly. "I might get a chance to work out my amplifier then, as I used to think I would, some day. If I could once get that sort of relay sensitive enough, and worked out the way I feel it *can* be worked out, you would be able to sit in Chicago and telegraph right through to London!"

"But how?" she asked.

"I always wanted to get a link between the cable and the ordinary Morse recorder, and I know it can be done. Then—who knows—I might in time go Lee De Forest one better, and have my amplifier knock his old-fashioned electrolytic out of business, by simply making a responder to Hertzian waves so delicate that it will translate even wireless and a telephone signal into Morse!"

Then he fell to talking about wireless and transmitters and conductors, and suddenly broke into a quiet chuckle of laughter.

"I don't think I ever told you about the fun we had down in that Broadway conduit. It was after the fire in the Subway and the Postal Union terminal rooms. A part of the conduit roof had been cleared away by the firemen. Well, while we were working down

there a big Irish watering-cart driver thought he'd have some fun with us, and every time he passed up and down with his cart he'd give us a shower. It got monotonous, after the fourth time or so, and the boys began to cuss. I saw that his wagon was strung with metal from one end to the other. I also knew that water was a good enough conductor. So I just exposed a live wire of interesting voltage and waited for the water-wagon. The driver came along as bland and innocent-looking as a baby. Then he veered over and doused us, the same as ever. Then the water and the wire got together. That Irishman gave just one jump—he went five feet up in the air, and yelled, and ran like mad up Broadway, with a policeman after him thinking he'd suddenly gone mad, trying to soothe him and quiet him down!"

And Durkin chuckled again, at the memory of it all. The sparrows twittered cheerily about the sunlit windowsill. The woman did not know what line of thought he was following, but she saw him look down at his bandaged arm and then turn suddenly and say:

"What a scarred and battered-up pair we'd be, if we had to keep at this sort of business all our lives!"

Then he lay back among the pillows, and closed his eyes.

"I say, Mame," he spoke up unexpectedly, "where are you taking care of that—er—of that money?"

Her hands fell to her lap, and she looked at him steadily. Even before she spoke she could see the apprehension that leaped into his colorless face.

"No, no; we mustn't talk more about anything today!" she tried to temporize.

"My God!" he cried, rising on his elbow. "You don't mean that anything has happened to it?"

He demanded an answer, and there was no gainsaying him.

"There is no money, Jim!" she said slowly and quietly. And in as few words as she could she told him of the theft.

It was pitiable to Mame to see him, already weak and broken as he was,

under the crushing weight of this new defeat. She had hoped to save him from it, for a few more days at least. But now he knew; and he reviled MacNutt passionately and profanely, and declared that he would yet get even, and moaned that it was the end of everything, and that all their fine talk and all their plans had been knocked in the head forever, and that now they would have to crawl and slink through life living by their wits again, cheating and gambling and stealing when and where they could.

All this Mame feared and dreaded and expected; but desperately and forlornly she tried to buoy up his shattered spirits and bring back to him some hope for the future.

She told him that she could work, that they could live more humbly, as they had once done, years before, when she was the fifth daughter of an impoornous provincial barrister-at-law and taught little children music and French, and he was a telegraph agent up at the bald little Canadian junction-station of Komoka, with a boarding-house on one side of him and a mile of gravel-pit on the other.

"And if I have you, Jim, what more do I want in life?" she cried out, as she turned and left him, that he might not see the misery and the hopelessness on her own face.

"*Oh, why didn't you let me kill him!*" he called out passionately after her. But she did not turn back, for she hated to see him unmanned and weeping like a woman.

XIV

"SURELY this is Indian summer!" said Mame one morning a few days later, as she wheeled Durkin and his big armchair into the sunlight by the open window.

His arm was healing slowly, and his strength was equally slow in coming back to him. Yet Mame was not altogether unhappy during those fleeting days of work and anxiety.

Her darkest moments were those

when she saw that Durkin was fretting over the loss of his ill-gained fortune, burning with his subterranean fires of hatred for MacNutt, and inwardly vowed that he would yet live to have his day.

She was still hoping that time, the healer, would in some way attend to each of his wounds, though that of the spirit, she knew, was the deeper of the two. Yet from day to day she saw that his resentment lay sourly embedded in him, like a bullet; her only hope was that what nature could neither reject nor absorb she would in due time encyst with indifference. So if she herself became a little infected with his spirit of depression, she struggled fiercely against it and showed him only the cheeriest ingle-nooks of her many-chambered emotions.

"See, it's almost like spring again!" she cried joyously, as she leaned over his chair and watched the morning sunlight, misty and golden on the city house-tops.

The window-curtains swayed and flapped in the warm breeze; the clatter of hoofs on the asphalt, the rumble of wheels and the puff and whir of passing automobiles came up to them from the street far below.

"It seems good to be alive!" she murmured pensively, as she slipped down on the floor and sat in the muffled sunlight, leaning against his knees. There was neither timidity nor self-consciousness in her attitude, as she sat there companionably, comfortably, with her thoughts far away.

For a long time Durkin looked down at her great tumbled crown of chestnut hair, glinting here and there with its touch of reddish gold. He could see the quiet pulse beating in the curved ivory of her throat.

She grew conscious of his eyes resting on her, in time, and turned her face solemnly up to him. He held it there, with the oval of her chin caught in the hollow of his hand.

"Mame, there's something I'm going to ask you, for the twentieth time!"

She knew what it was, even before he spoke. But she did not stop him, for

that new note of quiet tenderness in his voice had taken her by surprise.

"Mame, can't you — won't you marry me now?"

She shook her head mournfully.

"Isn't it enough that I'm near you and can help you, and that we can both still go and come as we want to?"

"No. I get only the little fragments of your life, and I want all of it. If you can't do it willingly, of course, it's as silly for me to demand it as to try to nail that sunbeam down to the floor there! But tell me, has there ever been another?"

"No, never, Jim!" she cried. "There was never anyone who could make me so happy—and so miserable, who could make me so unsatisfied with myself and with my life!"

He studied her upturned face. In it he imagined he could see all the old opposition of the dual and strangely contending nature. About the shadowy eyes seemed to lurk the weariness and the rebelliousness of the inwardly pure woman who had been driven to face life in its more dubious phases, the woman who had broken laws and essayed great hazards with him. Yet about the fresh young mouth remained all the pride and virginal purity of the woman whose inward life was still virginal and pure. In this, he felt, lay the bitterest sting of all. She was still a good woman, but the memory of how, through the dark and devious ways of the career that seemed to have engulfed her, she had fought and struggled for that almost incongruous purity of mind and body, remained to him a tragic and autumnal emblem of what her unknown earlier, April-like goodness of girlish soul must have been. He sighed as he thought of it, before he began to speak again, for it gave him the haunting impression that he had been cheated out of something; that the beauty and rapture of that Aprilian girlhood should have been his, and yet had eluded him.

"Even though there had been another," he went on quietly, "I don't believe it would count. Isn't it strange how we all beat and flutter and break

our wings around a beautiful face! One face, just a little softer, one woman's eyes, just a little deeper, and one voice a little mellower; and dear me, dear me!—how this wayward mortal passion of ours throbs and beats and surges about it! One beautiful face, and it sends world history all awry and upsets empires, I suppose, and sends out armies and makes men happy or miserable, as it likes!"

"That's the first time I ever knew you were a poet!" she cried in almost a coo of pride.

His hand lay heavily on her crown of tumbled gold hair.

"Won't you marry me?" he asked again, as quietly as before.

"Oh, Jim," she cried, "I'm afraid of it! I'm afraid of myself, and of you!"

"But see what we've been through together—the heights and the depths. And we never hated each other, there!"

"But there were times, I know there were times when you might have, if you were tied to me! We were each free to go and come. But it's not that, Jim, I'm so afraid of. It's the keeping on at what we have been doing, the danger of not keeping decent, of getting our thoughts and feelings deadened, of getting our hearts macadamized. That's why I could never marry you until we are both honest once more!"

"But if I do try to get decent—I can't promise to turn angel all at once, you know!—if I do try to be decent, then will you marry me, and help me along?"

"I don't look for miracles, Jim—neither of us can be all good; I don't think anybody can. It's not the being good, anyway; it's the trying to be good!"

"Wasn't there a bishop in your family?" he asked, with a quizzical little upthrust of his mouth corners.

"A bishop?" she asked, all gravity.

"There must have been a bishop, somewhere—you take to preaching so easily!"

"It's only to make it easier for you," she reproved him. Then she

added drearily, "heaven knows, I'm not self-righteous!"

"Then take me as I am, and you will be making it easier for me!"

"I could, Jim, if I thought you would begin by doing one thing."

"And that is?"

"Not try to get even with MacNutt."

She could feel the galvanic movement of uncontrol that sped down his knees.

"When that damned welcher gives me back what is mine, fair and square and honest, then he can go his way and I'll go mine—but not before!"

"But, was it fair and square and honest?"

"About as much so as most of the money people get—and I'm going to have it!"

"And that means going back to all the old mean, humiliating ways, to the old, degrading dodges and the old, incessant dangers!"

"But it's ours, that money—every cent of it—it's what we've got to have to start over again with!"

"Then you will scheme and plot and fight for it? And keep on and on and on, struggling in this big quicksand of wrongdoing, until we are deeper than ever?"

"Do you forgive MacNutt?"

"No, I do not! But I would rather lie and scheme and plot myself than see you do it. A woman is different—I don't know how or why it is, but in some way she has a fiercer furnace of sacrifice. If her wickedness is for another, her very love burns away all the dross of deceit and selfishness!"

"I hate to hear you talk that way, Mame, when you know you're good and true as gold, through and through. And I want you to be my wife, Mame, no matter what it costs or what it means."

"But will you make this promise?"

"It's—it's too hard on you! Think of the grind and the monotony and the skimping! And besides, supposing you saw a chance to get the upper hand of MacNutt in some way, would you fold your hands and sigh meekly and let it slip past?"

"I can't promise that I would! But it's you I'm afraid of, and that I'm trying to guard and protect and save from yourself!"

She caught up his free hand and held it closely in her own.

"Listen," he broke in irrelevantly, "there's a hurdy-gurdy somewhere down in the street! Hear it? It's playing 'Under the Bamboo Tree'!"

The curtains swayed in the soft breeze; the street sounds crept up to them, muffled and far away.

"Can't you promise?" she pleaded.

"I could promise you anything, Mame," he said after a long pause. "Yes," he repeated, "I promise."

She crept closer to him, and with a little half-stifled, half-hungry cry held his face down to her own. He could feel the abandon of complete surrender in the most intimate warmth of her mouth, as it sought and clung to his own.

When her uplifted arms that had locked about his neck once more fell away, and the heavy head of dull gold sank capitulatingly down on his knee, the hurdy-gurdy had passed out of hearing, and the lintel-shadow had crept down to where they sat.

XV

ON the following afternoon Mame and Durkin were quietly married.

It was a whim of Durkin's that the ceremony should take place on Broadway, "on the old alley," as he put it, "where I've had so many ups and downs." So, with his arm in a black silk sling, and she in a gown of sober black velvet, with only a bunch of violets bought from an Italian boy on a street corner, they rode together in a motor-cab to the rectory of Grace Church.

To the silent disappointment of each of them the rector was not at home. They were told that it would be impossible for a marriage service to be held at the church that afternoon. A little depressed, inwardly, at this first accidental cross-thread of fate, they

at once made their way up Madison avenue to the Church of the Transfiguration, where, they knew, many an impatient and lovelorn pair like themselves had been made man and wife.

"The way we *ought* to do it," said Mame, as they rode up the undulating line of the avenue, "would be to have it all carried on over a telephone. We should have had some justice of the peace in Jersey City ring us up at a certain time, and send the words of the service over the wire. That would have been more in the picture. Then you should have twisted up an emergency wedding ring of KK wire, and slipped it on my finger, and then cut in on a Postal Union or an Associated Press wire and announced the happy event to the world!"

She rattled bravely on in this key, for she had noticed, in the strong sidelight of the cab window, that he looked pale and worn and old, seeming, as he sat there at her side, only a shadow of the buoyant, resilient, old-time Durkin that she had once known.

The service was read in the chapel, by a hurried and deep-voiced English curate, who shook hands with them crisply but genially, before unceremoniously slipping off his surplice, and wished them much happiness. Then he told them that the full names would have to be signed in the register, as a report of the service must be sent to the Board of Health, and that it was customary to give the sexton and his assistant two dollars for acting as witnesses.

Mame noticed Durkin's little wince at the obtrusion of this unlooked for sordidness, though he looked up and smiled at her reassuringly as he wrote in the register, "James Altman Durkin," and "Mabel Edith Candler."

The service, in some way, had utterly failed to impress Durkin as it ought. The empty seats of the chapel, with only one pew crowded with a little line of tittering, whispering schoolgirls, who had wandered in out of idle curiosity, the hurriedly mumbled words of the curate—he afterward confessed

to them that this was his third service since luncheon—the unexpected brevity of the ceremony itself, the absence of all those emblems and rituals which from time immemorial had been associated with marriage in his mind—these had combined to attach to the scene a teasing sense of unreality.

It was only when the words, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," were repeated that he smiled and looked down at the woman beside him. She caught his eye and laughed a little, as she turned hurriedly away, though he could see the tear drops glistening on her eyelashes.

She held his hand fiercely in her own as they rode from the little ivy-covered church, each wondering at the mood of ineptitude weighing down the other.

"Do you know," she said musingly, "I feel as though I had been bought and sold, that I had been tied up and given to you, that—oh, that I had been nailed on to you with horseshoe nails! Do you feel any difference?"

"I feel as though I had been cheated out of something—it's so hard to express!—that I ought to have found another You when I turned away from that railing; that I ought to be carrying off a different You altogether—and yet—yet here you are, the same old adorable *You*, with not a particle of change!"

"Yes; after all, what is it? Why, Jim dear, we were married in reality that afternoon I opened the door to MacNutt's ring and saw you standing there looking in at me as though you had seen a ghost!"

"No, my own, we were joined together and made one a million years ago, you and I, in some unknown star a million million miles away from this earth, and through all those years we have only wandered and drifted about, looking for each other!"

"Silly!" she said happily, with her slow, English smile.

In the gloom of the motor-cab, with a sudden, impulsive little movement of the body, she leaned over and kissed him.

"You forgot that," she said joyously from the pillow of his shoulder. "You forgot about that in the chapel!"

They drifted down through what seemed a shadowy and far-away city, threading their course past phantasmal carriages and spectral crowds engrossed in their foolish little ghost-like businesses of buying and selling, of coming and going.

"You're all I've got now," she murmured again, with irrelevant dolefulness.

Her head still rested on the hollow of his shoulder. His only answer was to draw the warmth and clinging weight of her body closer to him.

"And you'll have to die some day!" she wailed in sudden misery. And though he laughingly protested that she was screwing him down too early in the game, she reached up with her ineffectual arms and flung them passionately about him, much as she had done before, as though such momentary guardianship might shield him from both life and death itself for all time to come.

XVI

MAME sent Durkin on alone to the Bartholdi, where, he had finally agreed, they were to take rooms for a week or two at least. There, she had argued, they could live frugally, and there they could escape from the old atmosphere, from the old memories and associations that hour by hour had seemed to grow more unlovely in her eyes.

On wisely reckless second thoughts, she ran into a florist's and bought an armful of roses. These she thrust up into the cab seat beside him, explaining that he was to scatter them about their rooms, so that he could be in the midst of them when she came. Then she stood at the curb, watching him drive off, demanding of herself whether, after all, some Indian summer of happiness were not due to her, wondering whether she were still asking too much of life.

Then she climbed the stairs to the little top-floor apartment, saying to

herself, compensatingly, that it would be for the last time. She felt glad to think that she had taken off Durkin's hands the burden of packing and shutting up the desolate and dark-memoried little place.

Yet it had taken her longer than she imagined, and she was still stooping, with oddly mixed emotions, over the crumpled nurse's dress and the little, glittering hypodermic that she had carried away from the Van Schaick house, when she heard a hurried footfall on the stairs and the click of a pass-key in the lock. She realized, with a start, that it was Durkin come back for her, even after she had begged him not to.

She ran over toward the door, and then, either petulantly or for some stronger intuitive reason, she could never decide which, stopped short and waited.

The door opened slowly. As it swung back she saw standing before her the huge figure of MacNutt.

"*You!*" she gasped, with staring eye.

"Sure it's me!" he answered curtly, as he closed the door and locked it behind him.

"But how dare you? What right have you to break in here?"

She was trembling from head to foot now, recoiling back step by step as she saw some grim purpose written on the familiar blocked squareness of his flaccid jaw and the old glint of anger in the deep-set, predatory eyes.

"Oh, I didn't need to break in, my lady! I've been here before, more than once. So don't start doin' the heavy emotional and makin' scenes!"

"But—but Durkin *will* kill you this time, when he sees you!" she cried.

MacNutt tapped his pocket confidently.

"He'll never catch me that way twice, I guess!"

"How dare you come here?" she still gasped, bewildered.

"Oh, I dare go anywhere, after you, Mame! And I may as well tell you, that's what I came for!"

She still shivered from head to foot. It was not that she was afraid of him. It was only that, in this new begin-

ning of life, she was afraid of some unforeseen disaster. And she knew that she would kill herself, gladly, rather than go with him.

"Now, cool down, little woman," MacNutt was saying to her in his placid guttural. "We've been through enough scrapes together to know each other, so there's no use you gettin' high-strung and nervous. And I guess you know I'm no piker, when it comes to anybody I care about. I never went back on you, Mame, even though you did treat me like a dog and swing in with that damned welcher Durkin and try to bleed me for my last five hundred! I tell you, Mame, I can't get used to the thought of not havin' you 'round!"

She gave forth a little inarticulate cry of hate and abhorrence for him. She could see that he had been drinking, and that he was shattered in body and nerve.

"Oh, you'll get over that! I've knocked around with women—I've been makin' and spendin' money fast enough for anybody this season; but no one's just the same as you! You thought I was good enough to work with once, and I guess I ought to be good enough to travel with now!"

"That's enough!" she broke in wrathfully. She had grown calmer by this time, and her thoughts were returning to her mind now, buzzing and rapid, like bees to a fallen hive.

"No, it's not," he retorted, with an ominous shake of the square jaw and beefy neck. "And you just wait until I finish. You've been playin' pretty fast and loose with me, Mame Candler, and I've been takin' it meek and quiet, for I knew you'd soon get tired of this two-cent piker you've been workin' the wires with!"

She opened her lips to speak, but no sound came from them.

"I tell you, Mame, you're not the sort of woman that can go half fed and half dressed, driftin' 'round dowdy and hungry and homeless, most of the time! You're too fine for all that kind o' thing. A woman like you has got to have money, and be looked after, and

showed around, and let take things easy—or what's the use o' being a beauty, anyway! You know all that as well as I do!"

"Yes, I know all that!" she said vacantly, wearily, for her racing thoughts were far away. She was inwardly confessing to herself that they who live by the sword must die by the sword.

"Then what's the use of crucifyin' yourself?" cried MacNutt, seeming to catch hope from her change of tone. "You know as well as I do that I can hound this Durkin off the face of the globe. I can make it so hot for him here in New York that he daren't stick his nose within a foot of the Hudson. And I'm goin' to do it, too! I'm goin' to do it, unless you want to come and stop me."

"Why?" she asked emptily.

"Didn't you save my life once, Mame, right in this room? Damn it all, you must have thought a little about me, to do a thing like that!"

"And what did you do for it?" she demanded, with a sudden change of front. Once again she was all animal, artful and cunning and crafty. "You played the sneak-thief. You slunk back here and stole *his* money. No, no; there's no good your denying it—you came and stole his honestly earned money!"

"Honestly earned?" he scoffed.

"No, not honestly earned, perhaps, but made as clean as it could be made, in this low and mean underhand business you taught us and dragged us into! And you came and stole it, when it meant so much to me, and to him!"

"Yes; I said I'd knock him, and I *did* knock him! But good heavens, what's his money to a high-roller like me! If that's all you're swingin' your clapper about, you may as well get wise. If it's the money you're achin' after you can have it—providin' you take it the way I'm willin' to give it to you!"

"I can't believe you—you know that!"

"You think I'm talkin' big? Well, look here. Here's my wad! Yes, look

at it good and hard—there's enough there to smother you in diamonds, and let you lord it 'round this town for the rest of your life!"

"You're drunk," she cried, once more consumed by a sudden fear of him.

"No, I'm not; but I'm crazy, if you want to put it that way, and you're the cause of it! I'm tired of plottin' and schemin' and gettin' mixed up in all kinds of dirty work, and I want to take it easy now, and enjoy life a little!"

She watched him slowly close the great polished pig-skin wallet, replace it in his inside breast-pocket and secure it there with its safety-button.

Mame gazed at him blankly, with detached and impersonal attention. He stood to her there the embodiment of what all her old life had been. In him she saw incarnate all its hideousness, all its degrading coarseness, all its hopeless vileness and wickedness. And this was what she had dreamed that at a moment's notice she could thrust behind her! She had thought that it could be slipped off, at a turn of the hand, like a soiled skirt, when the insidious poison of it had crept into her very bones, when it had corroded and withered and killed that holier something which should have remained untouched and unsullied in her inmost heart of hearts. He was her counterpart, her mate, this gross man with the many-wrinkled, square-set jaw, with the stolid bull-neck, with his bloated, vulpine face and his subdolous green eyes. This is what she had fallen to, inch by inch and day by day. And here he was talking to her, wisely, as to one of his kind, bargaining for her bruised and weary body, as though love and honor and womanly devotion were chattels to be bought and sold in the open market.

The ultimate, inexorable hopelessness, the foredoomed tragedy of her dwarfed and perverted life came crushingly home to her, as she looked at him, still confronting her there in his challenging comradeship of crime and his kinship of old-time dishonor.

"Mac," she said quietly, but her voice was hard and dry and colorless, "I could never marry you, now. But under one condition I would be willing to go with you wherever you say."

"And that condition is?"

"It is that you return to Durkin every cent you owe him, and let him go his way while we go ours."

"You mean that, Mame?"

"Yes, I mean it!"

He looked at her colorless face closely. Something in it seemed to satisfy him.

"But how am I to know you're going to stick to your bargain?" he hesitated. "How am I to be sure you won't get your price and then give me the slip?"

"Would Durkin want me after that? Would he take up with me when *you* had finished with me? Oh, he's not that make of man!" she scoffed in her hard, dry voice. There was a little silence; then, "Is that all?" she asked in her dead voice.

"That's just as you say," he answered.

"Very well," she said between her drawn lips. She stepped quickly to the back of the room, and lifting the hidden telephone transmitter up on the table she threw open the window to loop the wire that ran by the overhanging eave.

"Hold on there!" cried MacNutt in alarm. "What's all this, anyway?"

"I have got to tell Durkin, that's all. He has got to know, of course, what we have decided on."

"Oh, no, you don't, my beauty! If there's going to be any telephoning out of this house I do it myself!"

"It makes no difference," she answered apathetically. "You can tell him as well as I could."

She could see some new look of suspicion and rage mounting into his watchful eyes. "I do the talking this trip," he cried.

"Then cut in and loop that third wire—no, the fourth, counting the lighting wire—on the eave there. It is the Van Schaick house-wire—indeed, it would be much better to cut them off altogether, or there might be some

interference from them with Central. Now throw open that switch behind the window-curtain there—so. Now, if you will ring up Central and ask for the Bartholdi, they will connect you directly with Durkin. He is waiting in his room there for me. And every room of the Bartholdi has a telephone."

He looked at her, suspicious and puzzled, the momentary note of triumph gone out of his voice.

"See here, Mame, I may as well tell you one thing, straight out. Although I square up with Durkin for what I got out of him, and pass this money of his over to you, I tell you right now, *I'm going to smash that man, once for all!*"

"Smash him?" she echoed dismally. "Then you've been *lying!*"

"Yes, smash him! You don't imagine I'm going to have that piker shadowing and dogging me like a flatty all my days! I stand pat now with Doogan and his men. *And in ten days I can have Durkin up against ten years!*"

"Then this was all a trap, a plot?" she gasped.

"No, it's not a trap—it's only that I wanted to save you out of the mess. I'm wise enough in most things, but about you I've always been a good deal of a fool. It's my loose screw, all right; sometimes it's driven me near crazy. I'm goin' to have you and I've got to have you, I don't care what it costs me—I don't care if I have to pound this Durkin's brains out with a lead-pipe!"

"Take me! Take me—but save him!" she pleaded.

"Good God, it's not you I want—it's your love that I've got to have!"

"Oh!" she moaned, covering her face with her hands.

"It's a queer way of makin' love, eh?—but I mean it! And I want to know if you're goin' to swing in with me and get taken care of, or not?"

"Oh, you fool, you fool!" she cried suddenly, smiting the air with her vehemently closed fists. "You poor, miserable, misled fool! I loathe and hate the very sound of your voice! I despise every inch of your brutish, bloated body! I'd die—I'd kill my-

self ten times over before I'd so much as touch you!"

He looked at her gathering storm of rage, first in wonder, and then in a slow and deadly anger that blanched his face and left only two claret-colored blotches on his withered cheeks.

"I'll give you one last chance," he said, clenching his flaccid jaw.

"Chance! I don't want a chance! Now I know how things must go! Now I know how to act! And before we settle it between us, and if I have to —to lose everything, I want you to know one thing. I want you to know that I'm doing it for Durkin! I'm doing it all, everything, for *him!*"

"For Durkin?" he choked, with an oath. "What are you fightin' for that washed-out welcher for?"

"Because Durkin is my husband!" she said in her ashen white determination, as she stepped quickly to the door and double-locked it. "And because I would *die* for him"—she laughed shrilly, horribly, as she said it—"before I'd see him hurt or unhappy!"

She stood firmly with her back against the door, panting a little, her jaw fallen loosely down, her eyes luminous with their animal-like fire.

"Then, by God, you *will!*" said MacNutt in his raucous guttural, with his limbs beginning to shake as he glared back at her.

She stood there motionless, trying to think out the first moves in that grim game for which freedom and love and even life itself were the stakes.

"Then, by God, you *will!*" repeated MacNutt, with the sweat coming out in beads on his twitching temples.

XVII

MABEL DURKIN knew the man she had to face. She knew the pagan and primordial malevolence of the man, the almost demoniacal passions that could sweep through him. More than once she had seen his obsessions tremble on the verge of utter madness. She had come to know the rat-like pertinacity,

the morbid, dementating narrowness of mind, that made him what he was. In his artful and ruthless campaign against Penfield, in his relentless crushing of his old-time confederate, MacKenzie, in each and all of his earlier underground adventures, she had seen the sullen, bulldog, brutal contumacy of the man.

She expected nothing from him, neither mercy nor quarter. And yet, she told herself, she was in no way afraid of him. As she had felt before, time and time again, in moments of great danger, a vague sense of duality of being took possession of her, as if mind stood detached from body, to flutter and dodge through the darkness before her, freed from its sheath of flesh.

She knew that she would kill him now, if the chance came, quite easily and calmly. Yet she still diffidently half hoped that the chance would be denied her. It was not that she would be cowardly about it, but it seemed to her the darker and more dubious way out of it all.

No; it was *he* who must do the killing, she told herself, with a sudden pang of half-delirious abnegation.

That was the utter and ultimate solution of the tangled problem; it would be over and done with in a minute. She had lived by the sword and she could die by the sword, and from that moment would be counted the days of MacNutt's own doom and the release and the deliverance of Durkin!

She seemed to hug this new self-illumination to her, and a smile of scorn trembled on her lips as he stood over her, in his white and shaking wrath.

"Oh, I know you, you she-devil!" he suddenly cried out, with an animal-like snarl from the depths of his flabby throat. "I know what you're after! You think you'll do the cheap-heroine act; you think you'll end it by comin' between him and me this way! You think you'll save his puny piker's heart a last pang or two, don't you! You think you'll cheat me out of that, do you? You think that it's just between

you and me now, eh, and that you can do your martyr's act here while he's off somewhere else mooning about your eyebrows and taking it easy!"

And he laughed horribly, quietly.

"No!" he cried, with a volley of the foulest oaths; "no! If I'm going to get the name I'm going to have the game! I mean to get my money's worth out of this! I'm going to kill you, you cat, but I'm going to do it my own way!"

The room, that rang with his hoarse voice, seemed to grow small and dark and cell-like. The great, gorilla-like figure, in the gray light, seemed to draw back and go a long way off, and then tower over her once more.

"You're going to kill me?" she gasped, as though the thought of it had come home to her for the first time.

Her more ecstatic moment of recklessness had passed strangely away and had left her helpless and craven.

Nothing but terror was written on her face as she cowered back from him and sidled along the wall, with her fingers groping crazily over its blind surface, as though some unlooked-for door of release might open to their touch.

"You cat! You damned cat!" he cried hoarsely, as he leaped toward her and tried to catch her by the throat. She writhed away from him and twisted and dodged and fought until she had gained the door between the front and the back room. Through this, cat-like, she shot sidewise and swung to the door with all her strength.

It had been her intention to bolt and lock it, if possible. But he had been too quick for her. He thrust out a maddened hand to hold it back from the jamb, and she could hear his little howl of pain as the meeting timbers bit and locked on the fingers of the huge, fat hand.

As she stood there, panting, with her full weight against the door, she could see the discoloring finger-tips and the blood beginning to drip slowly from the bruised hand. Yet she knew she could not long withstand the shock of the weight he was flinging against her.

So she looked about the darkening room quickly, desperately. Her first thought was of the windows. She could fling herself from one of them, and it would all be over with in a minute.

Then she caught sight of the nurse's uniform of striped blue and white linen flung across the bed, and in a sudden inspirational flash she remembered the hypodermic. That, at least, would be painless—painless and sure.

She slipped away from the door, and at the next lunge of his great body MacNutt fell sprawling into the room. By the time he was on his feet she had the little hollow-needled instrument in her hand.

But he fell on her, like a terrier on a rat, and caught her up and shook her and crushed her in his great ape-like arms.

"Oh, I'll show you!" he panted and wheezed. "I'll show you!"

He dragged her writhing and twisting body through the door into the back room. She fought and struggled and resisted as best she could, catching at the door-posts and the furniture with her one free hand as she passed. She would have used her hypodermic and ended it all then and there, only his great grip pinned her right arm down to her side, and the needle lay useless between her fingers.

The room was almost in darkness by this time, and a chair was knocked over in their struggles. But still MacNutt bore her, fighting and panting, toward the little table between the two windows, where the telephone transmitter stood.

He pinned and held her down on the edge of the table with his knees and his bleeding right hand, while with his left hand he caught up the receiver of the telephone.

"Central, give me the Bartholdi, quick—the Bartholdi, the Bartholdi!"

It was then and then only that the exhausted woman clearly understood what he meant to do. She started up, with a great cry of horror in her throat; but he muffled it with his shaking hand, and, biting out an oath, squeezed the very breath out of her body.

"I want to speak to Durkin," panted MacNutt into the transmitter a moment later. "Durkin, James Durkin—a man with his arm in a sling. He just took rooms with you today. Yes, Durkin."

There was another long wait, through which Mame lay there, neither struggling nor moving, saving her strength for one last effort.

"Yes, yes; Duggan; I guess that's it!" MacNutt was saying over the wire to the switchboard operator at the hotel. "Yes, Duggan, with a lame arm!"

Then he let the receiver swing at the end of its cord and with his freed left hand drew his revolver from his pocket.

The gasping woman felt the crushing pressure released for a moment and fought to free her right hand. It came away from his hold with a jerk, and as her finger slipped into the little metal piston-ring she flung the freed arm up about his shoulder and clung to him. For a sudden last thought had come to her, a rotten thread of hope, on which swayed and swung her last chance of life.

It was through the coat and clothing of the struggling MacNutt that the little needle was forced, through the skin, and deep into the flesh of the great, beefy shoulder. She held it there until the barrel was empty. Then it fell to the floor.

"You'd try to stab me, would you!" he cried, madly, uncomprehendingly, as he struggled in vain to throttle the writhing body, and then raised his revolver, to beat her on the head.

The signal-bell rang sharply, and he caught up the receiver instead.

"Now!" he gloated insanely, deep in his wheezing throat. "Now!"

"Is that Durkin speaking? Is that Durkin? Oh, it is, is it! Well, this is MacNutt—I say, your old friend, MacNutt!" and he laughed horribly, dementedly.

"You've done a good deal of business over the wires, Durkin, in your day, haven't you? Well, you listen now, and you'll hear something doing!

I say to listen now, and you'll hear something doing!"

"Jim!" screamed the woman pinned down on the edge of the table. "Jim!" she screamed insanely. "Oh, Jim, save me!"

She could hear the sharp phonographic burr of her husband's voice through the receiver.

"Oh, Jim, he's killing me!" she wailed.

For MacNutt had taken up the revolver in his trembling left hand and was forcing the head with all its wealth of tumbled hair closer and closer up before the transmitter.

It had been too late! She closed her eyes, and in one vivid, kaleidoscopic picture all her discordant and huddled life stood out before her.

She felt a momentary shiver speed through the body that pinned her so close to it, as she waited, and it seemed to her that the gripping knees relaxed a little.

"Listen, you wether, while I shoot her!"

She felt the little steel barrel waver and then muzzle down through her tangled hair until it pressed on her skull. At the touch of it she straightened her limp body, galvanically, desperately. He staggered back under the sudden weight.

Then she caught his hand in hers, and with all her strength twisted the menacing barrel upward, inch by inch. The trembling finger on the trigger suddenly compressed as she did so, and the bullet plowed into the ceiling and brought down a shower of loose plaster.

Then he fell prone on his face, and she stood swaying drunkenly back and forth, watching him through the drifting smoke. Twice he tried to raise himself on his hands, and twice he fell back moaning, flat on his face.

"It's a lie, Jim, it's a lie!" she exulted insanely, turning and springing to the transmitter, and catching up the still swaying receiver. "Do you hear me, Jim? It's a lie—I'm here, waiting for you! Jim, can't you hear?"

But Durkin had fainted away at

the other end of the wire, and no response came to her cries.

She flung herself down upon the collapsed MacNutt, and tore open his coat and vest. As she did so the polished pig-skin wallet fell out on the floor.

His heart was still beating, but it would be murder, she felt, to leave him there without attention. His life was his own. She wanted and would take only what was her due.

It was fifteen minutes later that a frightened and pale-faced woman in a black velvet gown left word at the corner drug store that an old gentleman was ill of morphine poisoning, and asked if the ambulance might be sent for. All that the clerk could remember, when he was later questioned by the somewhat bewildered police, was that she had seemed weak and sick, and had asked for some plain soda water with brandy in it, and that the side of her face was swollen and bruised where she lifted her veil to take her drink. He was of the opinion, too, that she had been under the drug herself, or had been drinking heavily, for she walked unsteadily, and he had had to call a hansom for her and help her into it. What made him believe this, on second thoughts, was the fact that she had flung herself back in her seat and said, "Thank God, oh, thank God!" half a dozen times to herself.

XVIII

NEITHER Mame nor Durkin seemed to care to come on deck until the bell by the forward gangway had rung for the last time and the officer had given his last warning of "All visitors ashore!"

Then, as the last line was cast off, and the great vessel wore slowly out from the crowded pier, a-flutter with hands and handkerchiefs, the two happy travelers came up from their cabin.

As the liner swung round in mid-stream, and the good-byes and the

cheering died down in the distance, the two stood side by side at the rail, watching the city, as the mist-crowned, serrated line of the lower town skyscrapers drifted past them. The shrouded morning sun was already high in the east, and through the lifting fog they could see the river and the widening bay, glistening and flashing in the muffled light.

Mame took it as a good omen, and pointed it out, with a flutter of laughing wistfulness, to her husband. Behind them, she took pains to show him, the churned water lay all yellow and turgid and draped in fog.

"I hope it holds good," he said, linking his arm in hers.

"We shall make it hold good," she answered valiantly, though deep down in her heart some indefinite premonition of failure still whimpered and stirred. Yet, she tried to tell herself, if they had sinned surely they had been purged in fire! Surely it was not too late to shake off the memory of that old entangled and disordered life they were leaving behind them!

It was not so much for herself that she feared as for her husband. He was a man, and through his wayward manhood, she told herself, swept tides and currents uncomprehended and uncontrolled by her weaker woman's heart. But she would shield him, and guard him, and watch him, and, if need be, fight for him and with him.

She looked up at his face with her great luminous eyes, after a little ineloquent gesture of final resignation, and he laughed down at her, and crushed her arm happily against his side.

"Do you know how I feel?" he said at last, as they began to pace the deck, side by side, and the smoke-plumed city, crowned with mist, died down behind them. "I feel as if we were two ghosts, being transported into another life! I feel as if you and I were disembodied spirits, traveling out through lonely space, to find a new star!"

"Yes, my beloved own, I know!"

she said comprehendingly, with her habitual little head-shake. Then she sighed.

"Oh, my own! I'm so tired," she murmured.

He looked at her, knowingly, but said nothing.

Then she stopped and leaned over the rail, breathing in the buoyant salt air. He stood close beside her, and did the same.

"It's fresh and fine and good, isn't

it!" he cried, blinking back through the strong sunlight at the drifting city smoke.

She did not answer him, for her thoughts, at the moment, were far away. He looked at her, quietly, where the sea-wind stirred her hair.

"Good-bye, Old World, good-bye!" she murmured at last, softly.

"Why, you are crying!" he said as his hand sought hers on the rail.

"Yes," she answered, "a little."



PANTALOON'S CHOICE

ULYSSES and King Solomon, Prince Paris, Ruy Cid
Were mighty persons, I have heard, and famous deeds they did.

Aye, some were Christian gentlemen; some went to sea in ships;
Some traveled far, like Prester John, some died for ladies' lips.

Lord Cæsar bled with nineteen wounds—I think that was the number—
And many a tall and clanking king was done to death in slumber.

Duke Agamemnon he was stabbed. "Gramercy!" he did cry.
Count Hugo had his head chopped off—a chilling way to die!

Saint Louis was a holy man and Attila was bold;
But, like the twelve apostles, both went hungry and a-cold.

Thus, on the whole, I think I have no reason for complaint
That I was born poor Pantaloon and not a king or saint.

Sooth, they were gallant gentlemen, Pharaoh and Saladin;
Yet, by my stripes, not one of them would I choose to have been.

I'd rather be poor Pantaloon, to get me a good wife,
To live at home and die in bed and lead an honest life.

FLORENCE WILKINSON.



FINANCIALLY PROVIDENT

"HAVE you heard why she got a divorce?"
"Yes. She said she preferred a regular alimony to an irregular allowance."

IN MEXICO

FORGETTING naught of those fair days
 Which seemed the sweeter for the blaze
 Of tropic sun, and flowers run mad
 With color, and the joy they had
 In setting all our eyes agaze;

I wonder in a musing maze
 If your remembrance ever strays
 Along that path; if you are glad,
 Forgetting naught?

I still pursue prosaic ways;
 But something lost my heart dismayed.
 The landscape of my life is clad
 In pensive tints, exceeding sad.
 My penalty is what one pays
 For getting naught!

WILLIAM HOOPER HOWELLS.



WANTED TO SETTLE

“**T**HEY say,” said the society girl, “that Lord Littledough proposed to Grace Millyuns just to settle a bet.”
 “Indeed,” said her friend; “what was the bet?”
 “Well,” replied the society girl, “they say he bet five thousand pounds on the last Derby, and lost.”



CONNUBIAL MATHEMATICS

“**M**AMA, a man and wife are one, aren’t they?”
 “Yes.”
 “And the wife is the better half?”
 “Yes.”
 “Then what is the man?”
 “A vulgar fraction.”

THE DUTY OF THE BEAST

By Caroline Duer

L AURA BELLEGRADE became Laura Stanton at the age of nineteen. She knew that her mother and her two elder sisters, between themselves, spoke of the marriage as a sacrifice, and she therefore looked upon it as such, but she was also aware that it was a sacrifice which neither Elise nor Helen would have refused to make had it been required of them.

Charles Stanton, the son of an old friend and partner of her father's, was twelve years her senior; quiet and reserved to the point of taciturnity, unprepossessing in appearance, cold and shy in manner, but a remarkably shrewd and capable man of business, and one who had already made a reputation in the world of finance.

Laura remembered that some six years before, at the time of his entrance into the firm of Bellegrade & Stanton, she had had vague suspicions, schoolgirl as she was, of some disaster not unmixed with disgrace which hung over her family. She could not have told what chain of small events, what half-overheard sentences, what hardly understood words led her to this conclusion; but she gradually absorbed the belief that a serious and sinister misfortune had barely been averted, and that the elder Mr. Stanton, while behaving with extraordinary magnanimity at some particular crisis, had, in putting his son into the place he now occupied, deprived her father of all but the name and semblance of power. That this was unresented seemed to her proof positive that the affair, whatever it might have been, was one in which Mr. Bellegrade felt himself blameworthy; and indeed, from

that time forward she thought she detected a certain tremulous humility in his bearing whenever he was brought into contact with either of his partners.

The retirement of her family to the country at about this period of their career naturally affected her less than it did her sisters. Her governess instructed her as well—or as ill—on the banks of the Hudson as in the neighborhood of Fifth avenue, and it was undoubtedly more amusing to drive down to the station for her father of an afternoon than to take prim walks through streets lined with brownstone-fronted houses. But as she grew into young ladyhood she began, naturally enough, to sigh for those social gaieties which they had been deprived of and which she had never known. An occasional visit to some not inhospitable friend or relation, a ball or two—where her vivacity was overshadowed and her prettiness, even, eclipsed by the consciousness of a contrast between her own dress and deportment and that of the more sophisticated girls of her acquaintance—these were the nearest approaches to the joys of “coming out” that Laura had ever experienced when Charles Stanton made his proposals.

Mr. Stanton, senior—by whom she felt herself to be kindly regarded on the rare occasions when he came to her father's house—had died some eight months before, and Mrs. Bellegrade, pitying the young man's loneliness and perhaps not unmindful of obligations past and present, insisted upon his being invited from time to time to dine and spend the night at Brookdale.

Whether it was in compliance with

his father's wishes, as Mr. Bellegrade surmised, or simply the effect of Laura's company by moonlight, as her mother believed, certain it is that the day after a particularly soft, silvery night in June, the Head of the Family returned from town with the surprising request that its most youthful member would take into consideration the not distant prospect of becoming Mrs. Charles Stanton, provided, that was, that she could be induced to look favorably upon such a proposition at all.

Laura, who had driven to the station that afternoon, not so much to meet her father as to search for certain boxes delayed by the express and ardently desired by her sisters and herself, seemed, in her childish way, more eager for the safe arrival of a garland of artificial roses for her hat than interested in the presentation of a suitor for her hand. She appeared to be under the impression that Mr. Bellegrade was amusing himself at her expense, and warned him, with mock indignation, to carry the joke no farther under pain of being deprived of her company then and there.

She could and would walk home through the woods, she declared, but she could not and would not—please—be teased any more about Charles Stanton.

The lodge gates were in sight before she allowed herself to be convinced that the question was a serious one. Then she at once became grave and inquired with great gentleness whether in her father's opinion it would be right and wise for her to make such a marriage.

Mr. Bellegrade, somewhat stammeringly, went through the usual formula; the precariousness of his own life, the uncertainty of their prospects, the comfort of knowing that one of his daughters was happily and suitably provided for in the care of one of the finest young fellows he knew, by gad. He expatiated upon the many good qualities of Charles Stanton, for whom he seemed to have a genuine, if rather timid, admiration, and ended, as the carriage drew up at the house-steps,

by advising her—as indeed it would be well if the whole human race could be advised—not to be influenced by outward appearance. He wished her to decide entirely for herself, he told her, but he begged her to consult her mother before letting her mind come to any final determination.

Contrary to Laura's expectations, Mrs. Bellegrade showed no anxiety to persuade her. She admitted the excellence of the match from a prudent and provident point of view; she did not uphold the romantic notion that if one marries for love, one is, of necessity, certain to live happily ever after; but she did feel that her daughter was very young, very pretty and very charming, and that if she waited a little longer Fate might in some way give her the opportunity of seeing more of the world before she settled herself in life.

Laura's elder sisters, who ungrudgingly admired her beauty and spirit, and deplored the lack of both in Mr. Stanton, were of their mother's opinion. They felt, unselfishly and poetically, that the heliotrope-and-violet of their natures was more suitable for his transplanting than the carnation-pink of hers. It was a safe marriage, it was a sensible marriage; it was, perhaps, in a business way, rather a surprisingly good marriage for a little country girl to make, but for *Laura* they had hoped for something almost ideal. The arrival of Lohengrin in his swan-boat, or Prince Ahmed on his magic carpet, would not, figuratively speaking, have astonished them too greatly.

Laura, however, after a day of dewy-eyed musing, put from her all future dramatic possibilities, and, for reasons which she deemed full and sufficient, elected to become Charles Stanton's wife. Her behavior to him, when he appeared in the character of an accepted lover—quieter, and, if possible, more self-contained than ever—was sweet and submissive in the extreme.

She rowed with him on the river, she walked with him in the gardens, she sat with him on the terrace in the evenings, she laughed and chatted to him

more gently than was her wont, and left no innocent device untried to please and amuse him. When he departed she told her mother that the preparations for the wedding must be hurried as much as possible, for "Charles" was really beginning to find her so companionable that he hated to be without her longer than was necessary. And the little air, half of pride and half of reluctance, with which she said it almost brought tears to Mrs. Bellegrade's eyes.

So they were married, and went abroad for the traditional honeymoon, and came back in time for Laura to superintend, with due attention, certain redecorations and refurnishings of the old Stanton house before the winter arrived and she began her first season in town as a married woman.

She was prettier than ever, and people found her a charming and considerate hostess. They praised her good looks, her good manners, her good taste—in all but the selection of a husband, and that they assumed to be the choice of circumstance rather than of nature.

And in truth the man had added to his habitual silence and awkwardness a moroseness of bearing which made him far from popular with the friends whom his wife gradually drew about her. They did not hesitate to declare that he snubbed her and she was afraid of him, and they made unflattering remarks about the incongruity of the two every time they appeared together in public; his strong, short, thick-set figure, large head and heavy-lidded eyes making him look not unlike some sturdy gnome intrusted with the guardianship of the graceful wood nymph that Laura represented.

She deferred to him in everything, and had a way of appealing to him for approval, even in the smallest matters, as though her happiness were incomplete unless she pleased him entirely. This was so marked that the half of society who would have it that she feared her husband were almost talked down and put to shame by the other half, who affirmed that, strange as it

might seem, she was tremendously in love with him.

Her family, who considered themselves particularly sharp-sighted where she was concerned, were persuaded of her happiness and congratulated themselves many times upon the wonderful way in which the match was turning out. It was not until the second Christmas which Laura spent with them unattended by her husband that Mrs. Bellegrade, listening to the plausible excuses advanced to account for his non-appearance, began to wonder whether the sudden but sincere affection which she believed him to have entertained for her daughter had suffered any change.

She would, however, have dismissed the idea as absurd—for how could such a man be otherwise than joyfully bewildered by Laura's regard?—if the girl herself had not inadvertently let fall several things which served to confirm the momentary suspicion.

"It was very good of Charles to condemn himself to loneliness and let you come to us," Mrs. Bellegrade had said gratefully, as they went upstairs together before dinner.

"Oh, husbands and wives are none the worse for an occasional separation," Laura had returned constrainedly. "He made no objection to my coming. I—I think he rather enjoys a little solitude."

And though she was ordinarily a person of intuitions, she seemed quite unconscious of the fact that she had left her hearer with the distinct impression that Mr. Stanton preferred a lonely Christmas to one spent with his wife and her family.

This, of course, might not mean that he had absolutely ceased to care for the woman he had so hastily elected to marry, but it chilled the amiable feelings with which his mother-in-law had been disposed to regard him, and left her in no way unready to receive other impressions to his disadvantage.

So, later, when Laura exhibited to her the presents she had brought, deplored their poorness and inadequacy to express her loving wishes, adding

that she had unfortunately been extravagant of late and Charles had, very properly, refused to give her any more money to make ducks and drakes of—and quoting, as if in unwitting repetition of her husband's speech, "Put a beggar on horseback, you know"—Mrs. Bellegrade, considering it a proverb the reference to which did little credit to her son-in-law's taste, registered the incident in her mind as something significant.

"He seems to have provided the beggar with very lovely things," was all she allowed herself to say, as she glanced at the pretty gown spread out upon the bed, and noticed the heap of glittering rings and jeweled chains which her daughter had just deposited on the dressing-table.

And Laura, flushing, murmured something about being forced to appear suitably dressed, no matter how empty her pockets were, and seemed so distressed—either at the difference between her own and her family's worldly goods, or at having placed her husband in a possibly disagreeable light—that the subject was dropped by mutual consent.

But the conversation had the effect of making Mrs. Bellegrade sure that in the matter of ready money, at least, the poor child felt herself pinched, and she sighed as she wished to herself that they had been in a position to provide a suitable allowance for her.

"Lavishness and love change only too soon to coldness and carping," she thought. "I trust I am mistaken, but I wish in any event she were more free to lead her life according to her own sweet nature. I hope he is not hard with her, but something is not right between them."

Being a woman of sense she resolved to keep her own counsel, but nevertheless about this time it began to be whispered, here and there, that in his dealings with his wife Charles Stanton was neither generous nor considerate.

Later in the winter the inevitable "third party" appeared.

He was a distant relation of the

Bellegrades, who had lately come to the East to practice medicine. He had soon met and fallen secretly, hopelessly and sentimentally in love with his charming cousin, and hearing rumors—as who did not hear them?—that her path was not altogether strewn with roses, conceived it his duty to watch over her with whatever amount of tactful care nature and art had placed at his disposal.

His fine, grave, clean-cut, Indian face and lean, large-boned figure were often to be seen in her little, dim, fire-lighted boudoir late in the afternoon; and he fancied that in the freedom of relationship she did not shut him so entirely outside the pale of her real life as she did all others of her friends and acquaintances. He liked to think that her soft eyes turned unconsciously toward him when her husband failed to respond to some delicately pointed suggestion, or murmured an unwilling assent to an anxiously proffered request. He was overjoyed when on rare occasions she permitted him to exert himself in her service, and looked upon the few times when some speech or action of his had appeared to contribute to her pleasure as the most golden moments of his life.

But Laura was by no means as the "beautiful woman without discretion" mentioned in the Scriptures. She bore herself with a delicious, mild dignity, like a child playing at being grown up, and did not permit herself to notice any hint of sympathy for her position or of admiration for herself. If she could not quite conceal from so constant a visitor as her cousin that her husband was at times less than congenial, that his appearance and manner mortified her, that his abrupt entrances and sullen exits disturbed her, and that in certain moods she shrank from him almost as if terrified, she could at least avoid all recognition of the fact that such knowledge was mutual.

She made it apparent that in every way she proposed to play the part she had assumed to the best of her ability, and nothing could be finer than the simple loyalty with which she defended

a character whose idiosyncrasies she did not always succeed in concealing.

Her cousin never forgot the shock he received when he found her one afternoon deep in the perusal of a certain peculiarly unsavory specimen of French literature, nor his horror when, in the confusion of justifying herself before his austere and unsophisticated criticism, she heedlessly betrayed the fact that Charles was bored by her colossal ignorance and had recommended a series of such emotional classics.

Suddenly perceiving the effect of her words, she never rested till she had explained away her impulsive confession. But the more she assured her outraged and infuriated hearer that she "must have mistaken her husband, as in her stupidity she often did, and that doubtless he would be as offended by her unfortunate choice as anybody could be," the less he believed her.

Nor was his anger soothed by meeting that gentleman in the hall as he made his way out with the confiscated volume in his hand.

"I am stealing this book from your wife," he had said significantly. "I believe I shall appreciate it more than she will."

To which the other, raising his thick eyebrows, had made answer:

"I dare say she has plenty more. I hope you read French better than I do."

To the young doctor, who already suspected him of meanness, harshness and an utter lack of consideration for her, this—as it appeared to him—deliberate, underhanded attempt to deprave her mind seemed the very depth of unworthiness, and he hated Charles Stanton with a steadily increasing hatred.

He was hardly aware of the violence of this feeling until one day, when, while awaiting Laura's coming, he had wandered into the small boudoir where she usually gave him tea and overheard her in the room beyond, her voice strained almost out of knowledge, passionately exclaiming: "This is sheer brutality, Charles." Then there had been a short, hoarse laugh from her

husband, and she had entered with her hands at her throat and her eyes full of angry tears.

The change she forced into her features at the sight of her cousin, and her immediate attempt to greet him with some happy conventionality, served only to exasperate him still further, and, abandoning for the moment his rigidly enforced self-control, he made a quick step toward her.

"Perhaps you do not want me here now," he said stammeringly, "but I cannot go. I must—you must let me—do something to help you."

"If I ever require it," she answered, meeting his look more fully than she had yet done, "I will depend upon you, for I know that I have no truer or more faithful friend. In the meantime, let us forget that I am so silly as to make a baby of myself because my husband perpetrates a—joke that I cannot appreciate. I am ashamed to be so childish."

"Oh, Laura!" he broke out, a great pity flooding his heart. "You are nothing but a child. Why did you shut the gates upon your life so early?"

"Hush!" she laughed softly. "I did nothing that I would not do again. There are some things required of one which one must not look upon as a sacrifice, and if I have suffered in yielding to the pressure brought to bear upon me, I have also had my compensations."

But in his eyes the martyr's palm was in her hand and the saint's starry crown in her chestnut hair, while his detestation for the man whose name she bore smoldered like fire in his brain. He thought of him as a hideous and wily devil who had got her into his power that he might, at his will, wound her affections, undermine her goodness and only too possibly ill-treat her person.

And strangely enough Fate was preparing to deliver his enemy into his hands.

"Charles is ill," she told him, meeting him in the hall the next time he came. "He seems to be in great pain. Will you go up and see him? I prom-

ised that you should; that I would send for you if you did not come."

"He has 'Moses and the prophets,'" objected the young man. "Why hasn't he sent for them? Who am I that he should wait for me?"

"He wants you," she answered gently, "and I want you to go to him."

"Very well," he assented briefly, and followed her upstairs. At the door of the room she stopped and he went in alone.

In the shadow of the drawn curtains and the sudden flare of the firelight, the high-ceilinged apartment had somewhat the appearance of a cavern, and the master of it, lying awkwardly drawn up on the sofa, with one great shoulder raised against the cushions, his thick black hair tossed, and his heavy-lidded eyes laden with pain, looked not unlike a wounded animal that had crawled away there to suffer by itself in decent solitude.

The interview was brief, but when the doctor rejoined Laura his expression was extraordinarily strained and troubled, grave and perplexed, as she had never seen it.

"Your husband has a bad case of appendicitis," he said, "and he knows it. In my opinion the operation ought to be performed at once. He knows that also, but refuses to submit to it. He says he sent for me because he believed I would take care of him on these terms. I decline to accept such a responsibility. You must call in someone else."

"Against his wishes?"

"Certainly."

"Do you believe," she gasped, "that he will die if he does not have the operation?"

"I am afraid he already has general peritonitis, but I believe he has one chance in a hundred of pulling through if it is done at once," he returned, with a sort of fierce frankness.

"And if he will not consent, you must send someone else?"

"Under any circumstances it would be better."

She was silent a moment, her whole face quivering.

"He may refuse to see another person. He is horribly determined," she murmured at last under her breath, her frightened eyes fixed on his.

"He must not be allowed the choice. If there is a chance for him he must be induced to take it."

"Yes—yes," she whispered. "Go and tell him so again. He will consent. And if he allows it to be done, you will do it, won't you?"

"Not—" he began desperately, and then, meeting her look, stopped short. "If he and you desire it—of course—I will do exactly what you wish, but—"

"I could not bear to have anyone else near him and me at such a time," she said simply.

His hands clenched and his features hardened for an instant; then he turned away from her with all his usual impassiveness, and mounted the stairs again, leaving her standing in the hall.

As he paused on the first landing her voice reached his ears. She was standing just below him, looking up.

"Only one chance in a hundred, you said," she sobbed. "Tell him—that I —beg him to give himself that chance, for my sake."

He bowed his head and went on.

"So you've come back, doctor?" said Stanton, looking up as the door opened. "I hoped you might."

"On my own conditions, only."

"Still determined that I shall not die my own way?"

"There is a good fighting chance that you may not die at all."

"I am quite aware that, if you performed the operation, you would give your life's blood to save me," returned the other, with a curious widening of the mouth which might have been owing to a spasm of pain, or a sarcastic grimace.

The young man's eyes contracted.

"I am not anxious to officiate in person," he said coldly.

"No," agreed Stanton, "but if I let you, you would do your best for me because"—this time the smile was entirely apparent—"you hate me."

"I hardly think we need discuss that

now. My likings and dislikings have very little to do with the case."

"True," agreed Stanton again. "It merely pleased me to let you see that, in spite of that dislike, there was no one to whose skill I would so willingly trust—if I were going to trust to any."

"The worst devil on earth, if he were my patient, might still feel that, I hope," said the doctor shortly.

"And I'm not quite the worst, perhaps," suggested Stanton, with a whimsical sort of self-pity.

"For God's sake, man, don't waste time now talking about what you are or are not," broke in the other. "Your wife, who knows, and who has borne, and is prepared to bear, from you more than most women bear from their husbands, begs and entreats you, for her sake, to give yourself the chance of living."

There was a pause. Stanton's gaze never left his companion's face.

"She *has* borne and is prepared to bear from me *more* than most women bear from their husbands," he repeated slowly at last, "and still 'begs and entreats' that I give myself this poor chance of living—for her sake. Did she send that message?"

"The latter part of it."

Stanton smiled, and then sighed heavily.

"With due respect to your dexterity, doctor, it will be of no use," he said at last. "And I'm pretty well tired out with living. Still, if she thinks it best for her——"

"Best for *her!*" exclaimed the young man indignantly.

"Best for me; best for both of us," amended Stanton, without expression. "If, in short, she wishes it—why, I'll take the chance, if there is one, at your hands. Make what arrangements you please."

Mrs. Stanton had completely recovered her composure when her cousin met her a little later, and was able to listen to his suggestions and follow out his directions with perfect calm.

The operation was to take place that very night.

Nurses had arrived. She had glanced in at the horrid bareness of the place they were preparing. She had had an interview with her husband's lawyer, a parchment-faced, musty gentleman, of the name of Grudge, who had been hastily and, she declared, unnecessarily summoned, and who thought, as he watched her sweet face and listened to her gentle, despairing voice, that she more than deserved the extremely liberal terms of the codicil he had just added to his client's former will.

Now she was walking up and down her own room in a sort of trance; hoping for something she would not admit she feared, and fearing something she could not believe she hoped for.

The silence was horrible, but any sound seemed suggestive of something more horrible still. What were they doing in that bare room? At what awful period in their merciful butchery had they arrived? She opened her door and then shut it again, shuddering. The very air outside her own immediate surroundings felt oppressive. And yet the suspense and excitement within were strangling her. She suffered as she had never suffered in all her life before, and her face grew drawn and haggard.

In the meantime, behind another closed door, under the glare of the electric light, the intense gaze of four pairs of eyes was focussed upon the white, hoarsely breathing figure on the table.

All through the afternoon, as soon as he had been confronted with the crisis, and during his talks with Stanton, the doctor had been conscious only of his excessive dislike of the man and his rooted conviction that it would be unspeakably better for his wife if he died. He had dreaded indescribably having to perform the operation. He had an awful fear of bungling it in some way from the very constraint he would put upon himself to do his best. But the in-

stant he approached his patient he became, as it were, an instrument, with steady nerves, a keen intelligence and absolute self-reliance behind it.

He had operated with incredible neatness and despatch, and, though he had found the conditions such as to realize his gravest fears, he believed he had saved Charles Stanton's life.

The moment that he could leave him in the hands of the assistant and the nurses he went to Laura as she had bidden him. His mood was almost exalted and he hardly noticed her piteous state of excitement.

"We hope he will live," he said. "That is all I dare say now, and I must not stay—"

"Oh, don't leave me," she begged, beginning, now that the first suspense was over, to tremble and shake from head to foot. "You don't realize how hard this has been for me."

But for once his thoughts were entirely aloof from her; his mind still concentrated upon the condition of his patient.

"You must try not to let yourself give way," he said gently, rolling forward a chair for her. "Rest here for a little while and I will come back. This is a letter which your husband begged me to give you after the operation was over, no matter what the results might be."

He put the envelope into her hand and left her.

Laura sank back in the chair, her eyes closed and her lips slightly moving. It was some minutes before she drew the lamp toward her and opened the letter:

Beloved [she read], something of the old tenderness comes back just as I write the word. This, you see, may be my last letter to you; your first to me—do you remember slipping it into my hand?—I'm sentimental enough to keep always with me because it brought me my first dream of happiness.

Knowing as I did how ugly I was, how awkward in speech and manner, it seemed impossible that anyone so pretty and charming as you were could for any reason turn to me. In spite of my years I did not understand women very well in those days. Since then you have taught me a great deal

about them and their motives. How they may shrink from a man so that his mere touch is hateful to them—"sheer brutality" you called it the other day—and yet deliberately—but I beg your pardon, dear, it is "sheer brutality" in me to write so bitterly.

I'm afraid I have not made your life all that you hoped and expected it would be. I have tried—with my wretched money, which you were free to hoard or to let run through your little fingers like water, as best suited you; with my clumsy care, which you despised; with my love, which you repelled; but I know that I have failed utterly. I know, too, that it has pleased you sometimes to misinterpret and misrepresent me. I have read it between the lines of your mother's letters to me. I have seen it in the attitude of your friends. I have had it absolutely hurled at me by this new cousin of yours, who, poor young man! hates me roundly. Why did you do it, I wonder? It could add so little to the interest you already excited, and it has made me suffer beyond anything you can imagine. Beyond even the tortures of jealousy and hurt feeling I used to endure at first.

But no matter what you have done, I know you wanted to atone when you begged me—who was so more than willing to die—to live "for your sake."

If I do, we'll manage better in future. If I don't, I have arranged everything with Grudge, according to the written instructions you sent me, and I hope it will meet your wishes.

I should have told you all this, but I think you were afraid to come, and I would not send for you.

Yours ever,
CHARLES STANTON.

Mechanically Laura laid the letter on the table and gazed at it as intently as but now those four pairs of eyes in that other room had gazed at her husband's helpless body. In a dim way she felt that this was his soul, and that she ought to be very much touched by his revelation of it to her, and that, being dazed and numbed and hardened, it did not touch her at all.

A little sharp thought stirred deep down in her brain. He had said he carried a particular letter of hers always with him. He was ill; watched and waited upon by other people; all sorts of accidents might happen. Whether he lived or died—but he was going to live—she did not desire that any eyes, least of all the calm ones of her cousin, should inadvertently fall on that piece of paper.

With a sudden sense of violent irritation she sprang to her feet. But, after all, what could she do? Knock at the door of a dangerously sick man's room and demand a paper that he had hidden about him?

She threw herself down on the sofa and buried her face in the cushions. The short sentences of her first communication to him seemed printed before her eyes in little red flaming letters. The evening she gave it to him was as if it had been yesterday. She remembered the sudden recklessness of her determination to try a throw with Fate; to escape, by any means in her power, from the intolerable boredom of her life and flutter out into the world, dazzled and dazzling. This uncouth man-creature could not fail to be flattered by the proposition laid before him. Confident in her own charms, she had felt less the boldness of the action than the condescension of the request her note conveyed to him.

I believe your father liked me, and did not wish me to suffer for the sins of mine. Will you marry me, and take me away from this place, and put me where I belong? Indeed, I shall do you credit. Meet me in the rose garden after dinner, and I will tell you how unhappy I am, and how much you can, if you are kind, do to help me.

LAURA BELLEGRADE.

He *had* been kind then. She almost laughed at the recollection of her parents' real, and her own pretended, surprise when his abrupt proposal ensued the next afternoon. He had been, she supposed, kind ever since. And

yet it had seemed only natural that he *should* be kind to her and that she should do as she pleased. It was not her fault that she could not fall in love with him. It was not her fault—it was not her fault. She broke into a passion of weeping, cried till she had utterly exhausted herself, and then fell asleep.

About daybreak, four or five hours later, they roused her and told her that he was sinking rapidly; so rapidly that he might not live until she reached him.

"We made the best fight we could for it," she heard someone saying wearily, "but it was practically hopeless almost from the first."

Across her husband's dead body she looked, terrified, into her cousin's eyes, and read there only sorrow and sympathy.

She clung to his arm as he guided her out of the room. In her hand was a little crumpled red silk bag which she had taken from Charles Stanton's neck. It contained her first letter and her last penciled instructions in regard to his will. Somehow she felt that he might have smiled as he put them together for her to find, and she shivered at the thought.

"However much you may, and must, naturally grieve, Laura," said her companion gravely, "you have at least nothing to reproach yourself with. To have done one's duty to the utmost, is that no consolation?"

"An infinite one," answered Laura dreamily. "Oh, yes, an infinite consolation."



ITS IDENTITY

"PAPA, what is a den?"

"It is a place, my son, where a bear goes to eat, and a poet doesn't."



WHEN some people reach the age of discretion there will be no occasion to use it.

THE HOUSE

I WONDER if he hears the rain
 That ripples on the window-pane;
 I wonder if he hears it now,
 The rain he loved to hear.

His roof is softly laid with moss;
 His dwelling four sheer walls across.
 If sun nor sound endears it now,
 How can the house be dear?

Now presently each field of dun
 Shall be emblazoned by the sun;
 And each green field a ream of spring
 To write blue violets in.

His dwelling-place hath porch nor door,
 Nor rushes strewn upon the floor;
 Yet should he chance to dream of spring
 How may he bide within?

RICHARD KIRK.



A DEFINITION

“PAPA!”

“Well, my son?”

“Papa, does ‘Hon.’ mean honest?”

“No—politician.”



LOGICAL

MISS PASSAYE—I prefer the old novels to the new.

MISS BUDDE—That’s because you read them when they were new.



“HE is very optimistic, isn’t he?”

“Oh, yes! He is absolutely certain he can do anything he has never tried to do.”

THE DIFFERENCE

By Elizabeth A. Sears

THE lady of the twentieth century novel, fashionably correct in every detail, whizzed gaily down the page in her automobile. There were three clubs, a charity board, two receptions and a tea in the first chapter, and it needed haste as well as art to be seen at them all.

Hurriedly turning the corner on two wheels, she met a knight of the sixteenth century in full armor.

"I really think I must be in the wrong book," murmured the lady dubiously.

The knight paused and gazed at her inquiringly.

"Are you a 'female' in distress?" he asked hopefully.

"The term 'female' is out of date," she answered promptly, viewing him with some curiosity.

"Not in this book. You ought not to be here if you won't be rescued from distress."

"A woman of the twentieth century novel is fully capable of extricating herself from any difficulty," said the lady haughtily.

"Then you willingly deprive us of our chief occupation," complained the knight, with a bitter stare.

"Is there a tournament in this book?" pursued the lady, thoughtfully nibbling a chocolate.

"Certainly," replied the knight in amazement.

"Is it far?" asked the lady.

"There are dangers," said the knight doubtfully.

"For instance?" remarked the lady, with an indifferent air.

"Everything," hinted the knight gloomily.

"How lovely!" said the lady. "It must be very interesting."

"This is a very lonely wood," quivered the knight, gazing about fear-somely. "I suppose I'll have to ride in front."

"I guess not," remonstrated the lady. "You'll be in my way if you do."

"I'm sure you are very unreasonable. There may be robbers on this page."

"How thrilling!" said the lady, looking about her expectantly.

"What did I tell you?" whispered the knight in a worried voice, as a robber in the conventional brigand costume stepped abruptly from behind a tree.

"Here's where you stand and deliver," remarked the robber in the correct hollow tone.

"Oh, I don't know," said the lady easily. "There are publishess in the twentieth century also."

"That answer isn't in this book, anywhere," said the robber despondently. "Your money or your life. Hurry up."

"Have you any references?" queried the lady in a businesslike way. "One can't be too careful about such things."

"You mustn't talk back; I am a robber," he remarked anxiously.

"There are others," returned the lady nonchalantly.

"You haven't a watch about you, have you?" asked the robber, with an insinuating air.

"It strikes me," said the lady, catching her spark, "that your questions are quite searching."

"Look out!" yelled the robber in-

dignantly as she whizzed away. "You might have hurt me if you had run over me with that thing." And he stepped aside with haste.

The knight boldly leaned over and felled the robber with his lance and hurried after the lady.

"We have foiled him," he exclaimed triumphantly as his charger plunged along.

"Did you get your money back?" asked the lady practically.

"No; I did not stop. It would not do for you to be alone, you know. And besides, I was not real sure he was dead," the knight added sadly as they passed rapidly on to the next page where a languid female was reposing under a tree. Tears were flowing down her delicate face.

"You seem to be in trouble," said the lady casually as she set the brake and felt of her back hair.

"True," remarked the sad female; and her long ringlets writhed sympathetically over her sloping shoulders. "The lord of yonder castle has sought my hand in marriage."

"If you don't want him, why not mention it?" hazarded the lady as she tied her shoe.

"He has not asked me," said the female, burying her face in her fine cambric handkerchief.

"Then how do you know he wants to marry you?" asked the lady in astonishment.

"My honored parents have told me."

"Why not refuse?"

"It is not the custom," sobbed the female in a fresh burst of tears.

"Defy custom," advised the lady fervently. "Set your foot down firmly and say you won't marry him."

"What! Not marry? Have no establishment? Never!"

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it, why do you cry?"

"It is the custom," faintly responded the drooping female.

"What women of your generation really needed," said the lady in disgust, "was a change of diet and a course in physical culture."

"But you are so different, you know,"

murmured the knight timidly as they left the page.

"I should hope I am. That sort of thing is out of date."

"Now the best authorities—" he began, with a confident air.

"Whom do you call your best authorities?"

"Well — er — Chaucer, now — or Scott," said the knight, hesitating.

"Nonsense. No one reads that sort of thing any more."

"Then what do you do without us?"

"The historical novel does you full justice," said the lady soothingly.

"Perhaps you have written one," ventured the knight.

"It is in the hands of the publisher," said the lady, with a superior lift of her chin.

"You ought to see a real tournament before you print your book."

"You ought to read my book before you can really appreciate a tournament," broke in the lady decisively.

"It makes it so plain."

"We never have considered it to be one of the feminine attributes to interrupt," said the knight, with ponderous dignity.

"Oh, bother!"

"Exactly," went on the knight. "Our females never held such decided opinions on any subject."

"And what did they amount to, anyhow?" sniffed the lady defiantly. "A weeping, narrow-waisted, narrow-minded lot! They wouldn't know what to do with an opinion of their own if they were allowed to have one."

"Such a shocking statement!" gasped the knight. Even his helmet bustled with amazement. "No female—"

"Let's change the subject. What's that queer-looking thing in the next sentence?"

"Hush!" whispered the knight, quickly paling. "That is a dragon. What do you think we'd better do?"

"Vanquish it," advised the lady, with admirable promptness.

"Do you really think it safe? I'm not in extra good form today."

"That's not fair," said the lady, look-

ing at him with a reproachful face. "That expression was never used in your time."

"You're so particular," said the knight testily. "It's very hard *always* to get the right expression. Books differ so."

"That dragon is asleep!" cried the lady, with a disappointed air. "Are they hard to waken?"

"Very. You just watch me."

"But where are you going?" said the lady, looking around as the knight clumsily wheeled his charger and went back.

"To get a good start," answered the knight, with a superior air. "And then if he wakes up I can keep right on. You'd better climb a tree."

"I can see all right from here," said the lady, stopping her auto. "Don't be so poky."

"For St. George and the Dragon!" shouted the knight in a fierce voice. "You don't seem to realize the danger. That's no stage dragon. It's the real thing."

"But it ought to roar and spit flames and you ought to kill it after a mighty battle," protested the lady. "You really are not doing your part as you should."

"Oh, come on, for heaven's sake!" said the knight frantically. "We never will reach that tournament if we don't hurry. Besides, that dragon may wake up any time."

"You shouldn't say, 'For heaven's sake!'" said the lady critically. "You should say 'By'r Lady,' or 'Peradventure,' or—"

"That shows all you know about it," exclaimed the knight triumphantly. "Those expressions don't come in until the next century."

"Oh, well, it really doesn't matter. It's only a question of dates."

"Do you see yon massive structure that rears its battlements so proudly in the middle distance of the next sentence?" asked the knight suddenly. "That's the king's castle," he added, with impressive pride.

"You said that beautifully," said the lady, with an admiring glance.

"It's the first really appropriate thing you've said."

"I learned it by heart."

"Is the king at home?" asked the lady.

"He usually is. He's afraid to go away. There are several others, you see," explained the knight delicately.

"I see," said the lady as she rode gaily in at the gate.

"Here, you can't take your auto in there!" called the knight wildly. "The king won't allow it."

"I'm already in," remarked the lady scathingly. "Just pay attention to your own affairs." And she nodded to the king with a friendly air as she sat down.

"That's a lovely piece of ermine in your robe," said the lady. "I suppose it's the real thing. They get up such really good imitations nowadays."

"Pardon me," announced the king in a firm tone; "you mustn't sit down in my presence."

"Indeed?" said the lady in a decided manner as she crossed her feet comfortably and surveyed him from head to foot.

"It isn't etiquette. I am the king, you know."

"I wish you would ring for a glass of ice water," said the lady politely.

"You forget," said the king, brightening; "that idea has not been discredited yet."

"True," said the lady, gazing at him thoughtfully. "Then *send* for it."

"Send for what?" said the king, with a bewildered air.

"Why, the ice water!"

"But this is summer," said the king politely, "and we never drink water."

"No ice?" returned the lady, with indignation.

"If it was winter, now," said the king hopefully. "We always have ice in the winter."

"What's the use of being a king if you can't have a few privileges?" she demanded wrathfully.

"I often say so," murmured the king regretfully.

"The tournament, you know," reminded the knight hastily. "The

people are all there. For goodness' sake, don't contradict her," he whispered anxiously to the king. "There's no telling what she might do. She's writing a book."

"I'm ready," said the lady cheerfully, jabbing a hatpin through her hat.

"Doesn't that hurt?" asked the king, staring at her with alarm.

"Doesn't what hurt?" demanded the lady, turning suddenly.

"Oh—er—certainly," said the king, dropping his sceptre in amazement. "Really," he went on peevishly, "you are so very abrupt! I merely inquired if it didn't hurt to run that bodkin through your head."

"It isn't my head, it's my hair," said the lady, carefully arranging her veil.

"Indeed!" commented the king, gazing at her thoughtfully. "Still, you know, it has every appearance of a head."

"Fix your crown on straight," said the lady impatiently. "It makes me nervous."

"It won't stay straight," said the king fussily. "I've spoken of it again and again."

"Well, if you don't hurry," said the lady sternly, "the best seats will all be taken."

"Who's ahead?" asked the king as the tournament ended and the knights dashed away. "They crowded so I couldn't see."

"I've kept the score," said the lady. "I'll tell you in a minute."

"Let *me* see," said the king eagerly. "Where are my glasses, now?" and he fumbled helplessly in his pockets.

"Why, you can't do that!" remonstrated the lady, with a severe look.

"Can't do what?" said the king, pausing in his search.

"Certainly not," said the lady reproachfully. "You know very well that glasses were not even heard of in your time."

"I had forgotten," murmured the king meekly.

"I wish you'd take her away," he whispered fretfully to the knight. "It's very provoking to be reminded of these things."

"But you see—" began the knight in a frightened tone.

"You brought her," protested the king. "She has upset me dreadfully."

"She *came*," returned the knight, with dignity. "There is some difference, you know."

"I don't think much of your old tournament, anyhow," said the lady breezily. "A yacht race is lots more exciting."

"Possibly," said the knight humbly. "We have to live up to our restrictions, you know."

"Well, really," remarked the king, gazing at her fixedly as she puffed rapidly out of the book, "I am quite worn out. If it wasn't so early in the century I should like a refreshing cup of tea. She was so—er—strenuous, you know."



THE RULING PASSION

"YOU probably don't remember me," began the self-made man proudly, "but twenty years ago, when I was a poor, humble boy, you gave me a message to carry—"

"Yes, yes," cried the busy man. "Where's the answer?"

TWO WISE OLD MEN

By Joaquin Miller

THE world lay as a dream of love,
Lay drowned in beauty, drowsed in peace,
Lay filled with plenty, fat-increase,
Lay low-voiced as a wooing dove.
And yet, poor, blind man was not glad,
But to and fro, contentious, mad,
Rebellious, restless, hard he sought
And sought and sought—he scarce knew what.

The Persian monarch shook his head,
Slow twirled his twisted, raven beard,
As one who doubted, questioned, feared.
Then called his poet up and said:
“What aileth man, blind man, that he,
Stiff-necked and selfish, will not see
Yon gorgeous glories overhead,
These flowers climbing to the knee,
As climb sweet babes that loving cling
To hear a song?—Go forth and sing!”

The poet passed. He sang all day,
Sang all the year, sang many years;
He sang in joy, he sang in tears,
By desert way or watered way,
Yet all his singing was in vain.
Man would not list, man would not heed
Save but for lust and selfish greed
And selfish glory and hard gain.

And so at last the poet sang
In biting hunger and hard pain
No more, but tattered, bent and gray,
He hanged his harp and let it hang
Where keen winds walked with wintry rain,
High on a willow by the way,
The while he sought his king to cry
His failure forth and reason why.

The old king pulled his thin white beard,
Slow sipped his sherbet nervously,
Peered right and left, suspicious peered,
Thrummed with a foot as one who feared,
Then fixed his crown on close; then he
Clutched tight the wide arm of his throne,
And sat all sullen, sad and lone.

At last he savagely caught up
 And drained, deep drained, his jeweled cup;
 Then fierce he bade his poet say,
 And briefly say, what of the day?
 The trembling poet felt his head,
 He felt his thin neck chokingly.
 "Oh, king, this world is good to see!
 Oh, king, this world is beautiful!"
 The king's thin beard was white as wool,
 The while he plucked it terribly,
 Then suddenly and savage said:
 "Cut that! cut that! or lose your head!"

The poet's knees smote knee to knee,
 The poet's face was pitiful.
 "Have mercy, king! hear me, hear me!
 This gorgeous world is beautiful,
 This beauteous world is good to see;
 But man, poor man, he has not time
 To see one thing at all, save one——"

"Haste, haste, dull poet, and have done
 With all such feeble, foolish rhyme!
 No time? Bah! man, no bit of time
 To see but one thing? Well, that one?"

"That one, oh, king, that one fair thing
 Of all fair things on earth to see,
 Oh, king, oh, wise and mighty king,
 That takes man's time continually,
 That takes man's time and drinks it up
 As you have drained your jeweled cup—
 Is woman, woman, wilful, fair—
 Just woman, woman, everywhere!"

The king scarce knew what next to do;
 He did not like that ugly truth;
 For, far back in his sunny youth,
 He, too, had loved a goodly few.
 He punched a button, punched it twice,
 Then as he wiped his beard he said:
 "Oh, threadbare bard of foolish rhyme,
 If man looks all his time at her,
 Sees naught but her, pray tell me, sir,
 Why, how does woman spend her time?"

The singer is a simple bird,
 The simplest ever seen or heard.
 It will not lie, it knows no thing
 Save but to sing and truly sing.
 The poet reached his neck, his head,
 As if to lay it on the shelf
 And quit the hard and hapless trade

Of simple truth and homely rhyme
 That brought him neither peace nor pelf;
 Then with his last, faint gasp he said:
 "Why, woman, woman, matron, maid,
 She puts in all her precious time
 In looking, looking at herself!"

A silence then was heard to fall
 So hard it broke into a grin!
 The old king thought a space and thought
 Of when her face was all in all—
 When love was scarce a wasteful sin,
 And even kingdoms were as naught.
 At last he laughed, and in a trice
 He banged the button, banged it thrice,
 Then clutched his poet's hand and then
 These two white-bearded, wise old men
 They sat that throne and chinned and chinned,
 And grinned, they did, and grinned and grinned!



IN HIS TURN

MILLIE—Engaged to Jack? Then you won't marry Harry, after all!
 EUNICE—Not after all. But maybe after Jack.



WELL SUPPLIED

MRS. HENPECK—I was thinking that perhaps you didn't get enough sympathy from me.
 HENPECK—Never mind, my dear. I get that from all my friends.



OBLIGING

OLD ROCKSEY—I couldn't allow a daughter of mine to marry a fellow who wrote poetry.
 IMPECUNE—But, my dear sir, as soon as I marry her I'll quit.

THE COBWEB ON THE GRASS

LO! on the grass a glittering cobweb spread,
Of rarer weave than ever loom let fall,
With many a drop to gem its gauzy thread,
Spun, looped and tied by unschooled instinct all.
Look, at a touch the silvered cables part!
A breath, the airy pattern melts to air;
Through the torn mesh the saucy grass-blades start,
And earth disowns that which was once so fair.

Such was the web by cunning fancy wrought,
Strung with the rainbow drops of dawning day,
Till sage Experience from the realms of thought
Came with slow step to brush our dreams away.
Now the grass wakes, now the noon sun shines hot,
And Love looks back, remembering what is not!

DORA READ GOODALE.



PRESUMABLY

PENFIELD—What is the nature of his book?

MERRITT—It must be a tragedy. The two principal characters in it get married in the first chapter.



HIS CONDESCENSION

DEACON IRONJAWS—I must admit, the ways of Providence are beyond my understanding.

GRIMSHAW—How kind of you!



STILL BETTER

“**D**ON’T you wish you were able to afford an automobile?”
“No, but I’d like to be able to afford to say I can’t afford it.”

THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS

By Owen Oliver

THREE is no God!" Harding shut his lips firmly after the words, and Lady Margeson nodded. Mrs. Harding shivered and drew a deep breath. She had been an ordinary, church-going person before her marriage, and Harding had convinced her reason without her will. He was a brilliant scientist, and president of the Materialistic Society. Lady Margeson was vice-president. I was a friend of hers. I had left religion outside my life, till their unbelief stirred some slumbering faith.

"I do not mean," Harding went on, "that there is no power outside us and superior to us; no reason for things which we cannot understand. I call it law. You can call it God if you like, and I shall have no quarrel with you. The God whom I deny is the God of our fathers; the personal deity who was supposed to watch over our little lives and our little world, down to a sparrow's fall; the God who gave us individually punishment or reward. There is no room for such particular providence in science. There is matter and there are laws of matter. There is mind—which is another phase of matter—and there are laws of mind—which are really material laws. Matter and mind and laws make up the universe as known to science. There is no God!"

The stranger at the next table turned round and stared at us. We were taking tea on the veranda of our hotel at Algeciras, the new hotel at the south of the town, at the edge of the bay. When he had stared for a few seconds he leaned forward and stretched out his hands. His fingers

twitched and he laughed an unmirthful laugh.

"There is a devil!" he said abruptly.

Mrs. Harding clasped her hands suddenly, and Harding shrugged his shoulders.

"Can you show him to us?" he asked.

The stranger plucked aimlessly at his knees, and drew his breath through his teeth. He was a bent, faded man, and he looked as if he might be older than he was.

"Yes," he answered.

Harding placed another chair with a smile.

"We shall be pleased to meet your friend," he announced.

The stranger's eyes flashed and he drew himself up. He was a tall man, we saw then.

"I do not jest," he said sternly. "If he came in human form I should expect him to take that of a 'friend' of mine; but he will not come like that; and you will not treat him as a jest." He pushed his empty chair angrily aside and towered over Harding. "You are eaten up with the pride of the pseudo-knowledge that you call science. Science! You cannot explain the least of the little things that go on around you every day. The world isn't atoms and rays and vibrations. It is things that you can touch and see; loves and fears and hates. All your laws will not alter what I have suffered. I have seen the devil; spoken to him; bartered my soul with him!" His voice rose to a scream. We looked at one another. Our looks said that he was mad and we had better humor him.

"That is very—interesting," Hard-

ing said. "Perhaps you will tell us about him."

"I will tell you," the stranger replied, "because I must tell someone." He had shrunk into a bent, fearful man again. "It was ten years ago in this very place, at Wilder's house on the hill. It is my house now, but they still call it by his name. He was my enemy. God—if there *is* a God—knows that he had cause enough to hate me. I am not pretending that I was a good man. I wasn't. But he made me what I was; and I was down and he was trampling on me. He had ruined me and mine slowly—slowly." His face worked. "He held me in the hollow of his hand, and I came to beg for mercy. I was only a bundle of broken-down nerves, or I wouldn't have done that. He laughed me to scorn; vaunted the proofs that he held against me; told me how he would use them one by one. He had ruined my reputation already. Now he would ruin that of those dear to me. They should be seized and punished. The guilt was all mine, but the law would hold them guilty also. Next he would bring out his proofs of the greater offenses, and I should be made a convict. When I had seen them ruined, and eaten out my heart in prison, he would produce his last proof, and the law should kill me. Yes, you may shrink from me. I was a murderer in the eyes of the law; but I fought for my life, and I fought fairly. I don't think that God—if there is a God—blames me for that. Shall I go? I see that you shudder."

"I was thinking how you have suffered," Lady Margeson said gently. "I am very, very sorry for you."

I think she meant it. She had all the feminine virtues but religion.

"I have suffered. Well, he and his servants seized me and bound me, and beat me till I fainted. They left me in the room in the turret. When I came to I was bound to a chair, staring out of the window at the rock of Gibraltar across the bay, and the stars on top of it. Wouldn't you have listened to the devil, when

he came to you?" He turned to Harding.

"I should possibly have dreamed that he came," Harding said.

"Dreamed! Dreams do not bring a knife and cut your bonds, and chafe your cramped limbs till you can stand. That is what he did. I was safer with the devil, I thought, than with Wilder."

"How did you know it was the devil?" I asked.

The stranger shuddered.

"How do we know anything? The surer the belief the less reason we can give for it. *I did* know. *You* will know if you see him. He blazed fire, breathed it. He spoke as the devil would speak, laughing horribly between his words." The stranger laughed—horribly. "I was ruined body and soul," he said, "and could make things no worse for myself here or hereafter. If I would kill Wilder he would give me ten years of life, on condition that if I undid any of the evil that I had done he could claim me at once. At the end of the ten years I was to surrender myself in the room in the turret. I consented. Would a starving man consent to eat? The ten years are up at twelve tonight."

"And you killed Wilder?" I asked.

He nodded. "Why not?" he demanded.

Mrs. Harding answered.

"Vengeance is not for man," she said. "It is"—she met her husband's eyes—"the law's." There was a hysterical catch in her voice.

"It was not merely vengeance; it was self-preservation. He was sleeping. I could not see his face in the dark, but I found it by his breathing. I laid a cloth over his face, steeped with a fluid that the devil showed me in a cabinet. Then he let me out of the back door. The dawn was coming, and a cock crew. I looked around to thank him, but he had vanished. He was the devil, right enough! I took the early morning boat to Gibraltar. One of the P. & O. steamers was just leaving for England. I went in her. Since then—ten years have passed."

"And in those ten years?" Lady Margeson asked.

"I have suffered hell in anticipation. The devil made a good bargain. He generally does, I believe. That is all."

Mrs. Harding leaned forward. Her face was very pale, and she clutched the bosom of her blouse with one hand.

"Not all," she entreated. "You have repented?"

"Repented? Is there repentance in science?"

"I was not thinking of science. I used to believe—other things."

She looked timidly at her husband, but he frowned slightly and she said no more. He had no intention of overawing her conscience, but he did.

There was a long silence. Then Harding spoke.

"You will not be surprised if we are a little incredulous," he said suavely, "but we are willing to be convinced. May I join you tonight?"

The stranger looked at him under his bushy eyebrows.

"Yes," he said. "I—I am horribly afraid. If I thought there were anything in your science—a drowning man catches at a straw, you know."

He laughed the horrible laugh again.

"There is more in science than you imagine," Harding said. "If you will trust to us I think we shall save you. Anyhow, I will come tonight."

Lady Margeson looked at me, and I nodded.

"Mr. Fleming and I will come too," she said.

"Then we'll all come," Harding said. "All three, I mean. You had better stay at home, Kathie. Things worry you." He patted his wife's shoulder. He was very fond of her.

"It would worry me more to be away from you," she pleaded. "I must come, dear."

"Then we will all come. You must dine with us—we can't have you frightening yourself alone. It wouldn't give science a fair chance. After dinner we will walk up with you and wait till twelve."

The stranger bowed. "The thanks of a doomed man," he said. Then he

went. We watched his bowed figure, walking slowly.

"It is a case of vivid hallucination," Harding explained; "hallucination so vivid that to all intents and purposes he *did* see the devil. He'll be all right if we can get him over twelve o'clock."

"You won't," Lady Margeson said. "He'll die of fright. Can't you drug him at dinner and wake him after twelve?"

Harding shook his head.

"He'd hold that he'd broken his contract to be in the turret at twelve and have a hallucination *here*. We don't want that. No; we'll put back our clocks gradually, and I'll try to bribe his servants to put back *his* clocks. When they are at eleven-thirty we can tell him that twelve has passed; and the devil hasn't come."

"Unless he has!" said Lady Margeson, with a laugh.

"Don't!" cried Mrs. Harding. "Don't! I can't bear it. I used to believe these things till Frank talked to me. If you have loved anything you can't bear to hear it made a jest of, even when—I am silly, I know."

She turned suddenly and went in. Her husband followed her; and after awhile Lady Margeson went also. She joined me for our usual stroll before dinner.

"Superstitions die hard," she said musingly as we strolled along the sea-shore. "That poor little woman half expects to see a real fiery devil with a pitchfork tonight. I went into her room and found her praying. If her husband's brains save this poor scoundrel she'll fancy to the end of her days that her prayers did it. Can you understand how people believe such things in this twentieth century?"

"Yes," I said. "I can understand. I don't believe this man's story, or any tales of that sort. But I think I believe in God—the old-fashioned God."

She stopped in her walk and looked hard at me.

"Why have you not told me before?" she asked. There was a sharpness in her voice that was new to me.

"Sheer cowardice. I remembered what you said about Harding. 'Be ye not unequally yoked with believers.' I valued your friendship greatly, Lady Margeson—I was not sure of myself either till lately. I have been content to leave my religion in the background. I didn't know I had any till you and Harding forced me to look there. You have a right to look, too, because—because of what I meant to say to you. Perhaps you would rather that I left it unsaid."

She looked away over the bay. It was growing dusk, and the spangle of lights on the rock-side at Gibraltar was spreading rapidly.

"Yes, please," she said. "I—I am sorry. Now I must go in to dress."

"It is nearly time," I agreed. "We will talk of something else."

But we did not talk any more till we parted in the hall, and she turned to me from the foot of the stairs.

"Believers and unbelievers can remain friends," she said. The accent on the last word stabbed me, as she intended.

Harding came in hot and dusty as I was finishing my cigarette. He had been up to the house on the hill, and succeeded in arranging about the clocks. The stranger arrived punctually. He was perfectly dressed, and his manners were those of good society. He saved some awkwardness by asking to be excused from robbing either of us of a lady to take in to dinner. So Harding took Lady Margeson and I took Mrs. Harding. She and I were silent listeners to the conversation of the others, who talked brilliantly and incessantly.

"You should not go tonight, Mrs. Harding," I advised her under my breath. "You feel things; and it may be painful. The hallucination may return, and if it does he'll die or go mad from fright. You can do nothing."

"Oh!" she clasped her hands. "I can pray!—Mr. Fleming, I *can't* believe in this disbelief of theirs. I carry a little iron cross always in my bosom as a charm. I shall take it

tonight. You won't tell my husband, will you?"

"No," I promised; "but I think you should. Dear Mrs. Harding, we all have to be martyrs for our belief sometimes. I, too, believe; and I have told Lady Margeson. You know what that means to me."

She stooped with a pretense of picking up something, and wiped her eyes furtively.

"Thank you," she said. "You have helped me."

As the dinner went on Harding talked more and more brilliantly, and the stranger rivaled him. He seemed to have become another man since the afternoon. Lady Margeson gradually dropped out of the conversation, and sat looking down at the table-cloth and toying with the dessert. We had our coffee and cigars on the veranda with the ladies; and we all joined in the conversation, wishing to keep the stranger's mind occupied; but she did not address me directly till we were walking to the stranger's house. The clocks were at half-past ten when we started, the real time being ten minutes to eleven. The others left her to me as a matter of course. I did not offer my arm, but she took it when we entered the gloomy avenue of the house on the hill.

"You hurt me this afternoon," she said suddenly; "hurt me badly and unexpectedly. The fight against superstition—as it seems to me—has been in the front of my life for years. If I tolerated belief openly my influence would be gone and I should be shamed to the world. You quoted me correctly; but I will amend the quotation, because—when you said what you meant to say, I meant to say 'yes'—'be not unequally yoked with those who publicly profess belief.' That is what I ought to have said. No, I ought not to say it; but I do."

Her hand trembled on my arm. I caught my breath sharply. I had not dreamed that she loved me so much.

"Margaret!" I cried. "Margaret! You show me a coward's way!"

She drew her hand sharply from my arm, and we came out of the shadow into the flickering light of the lamp at the door.

It was a big, sombre house, full of heavy tapestries and gloomy oak furniture, and badly lit by antiquated electric lights that Wilder had installed when electric-lighting was in its infancy. The huge black rafters showed in the lofty roof. Harding's voice echoed weirdly among them as he jested. Mrs. Harding hung on his arm as he went upstairs, and Lady Margeson walked close to me. She clutched my sleeve when the great clock on the landing whirred before striking eleven. It was half-past, really.

The room in the turret was a huge attic. The roof shelled down to the floor at each end. The sides were covered with hangings. The place was crowded with odds and ends of old furniture so that it looked like a second-hand warehouse. Two doors led to empty attics. The stranger opened them, and held a lighted match over his head to insure that they were empty. There was a large screen of carved wood, fronted with a dull red cloth, worked with a fantastic figure in blue and green. "A fevered imagination could easily make a devil out of it," Harding whispered. A single flickering electric light hanging from the ceiling cast shadows out of proportion to the light which it gave. The floor creaked loudly as we walked over it, and the furniture made uncanny noises from time to time. The air was pervaded with a musty, dusty odor.

The stranger extricated some chairs from the lumber, and pulled a table into the centre of the room. Lady Margeson dusted them with a faded piece of embroidery. We sat down with our elbows on the table and our heads on our hands, and listened to Harding. It was part of his plan to distract the stranger's attention by a pretended preparation for combating the "devil" by science.

"We have promised our aid in laying the spectre which haunts our

friend," he said. "We can do this most effectively by preventing its re-appearance. For this purpose I must first explain how such apparitions appear."

"It was not an apparition," the stranger interrupted. "I saw it—touched it. It is useless to question the evidence of our senses."

"Granted," Harding agreed; "but we are apt to think that our senses tell us a great deal more than they do. What we call the direct perception of objects includes a vast amount that is only inference. The error—when there is error—lies there. Let us take a concrete case. Here, by my side, I say, is my wife; the dearest and most familiar object to me. How do my senses tell me this? A tracing of lines and light and shadow is all that I can see; but by 'my wife' I mean much more than this. My mind has added to what my sense has told me. I know by the memories of past experience that she is warm flesh and blood; that her voice when she speaks will be low and sweet; that she will be a certain height if she stands; that the blouse she wears is silk, and the locket at her neck gold; that she is gentle and kind; that she loves music, and books, and doesn't care for poetry or plays; that she believes this and disbelieves that"—he smiled suddenly—"and takes two lumps of sugar in her tea! I see 'my wife,' I say, and mean all these things and a hundred times more; and all that I have really seen is those inadequate tracings in my eyes!"

"That is all very well, you will say; but I am right. My wife is here. Granted again. But suppose that this bad light were much worse; and someone else had slipped into her chair; and I saw vaguely the outline of a female face of about her color, and a female shape of about her size—all that I could see if my wife were there. This vague color and outline would go to my mind and bring up the memories that are readiest to hand; the characters of my wife; the same thoughts as before. I shall see my wife just as plainly as if the vague sight

impressions were caused by her. I shall say as before, 'That is my wife.' The error is not in the sense impression, but in the inferences that I draw. So I have what is called an illusion. Do you follow me?"

"*Something* is there," the stranger replied. "That is no illusion. The illusion as to its identity vanishes when you test it. I 'proved the spirit.' It was no illusion. You will see."

He looked around him fearfully. Our eyes followed his to the shadows in the corners and we shuddered. Lady Margeson drew out her watch and held it so that he could see. "Just after twenty-past eleven," she said. So we knew that it was nearly twelve.

"Granted," Harding conceded once more. "You can put an illusion to the test of sense. But I will go a step further. Suppose I am in this lonely garret alone. Suppose that I am hurt and sick and have come to from a faint; and probably have been drugged. Suppose that I am in fear of my life—and more. Suppose that in my frenzied agony I think of my wife—I should think of you, little Kathleen—my fevered imagination raises the memory of her to such vividness that it equals, or surpasses, the sense impression which gave me the illusion. So my disordered mind takes it as an object of sense, and supplies the memories that belong to it as before. Again I say I see my wife; and indeed I do, as much as before. Only the first time she was there; the second time *something* was there; this time there is nothing. *That* is what we call a hallucination. Your senses have failed you. They will neither prove nor disprove. Do you follow me now?"

"I follow you with my mind," the stranger said. "My belief does not follow you at all. And suppose it was a hallucination. A hallucination that is as strong as sense *is* reality."

"No," Harding contradicted. "The test of reality is that it reappears."

"It *will* reappear," the stranger cried hoarsely, "at twelve. If only I could pray——"

Mrs. Harding lifted her clasped hands

"Pray," she cried. "Pray to God. He will deliver you. He——"

The electric light went suddenly out. Something stirred behind the great screen. A faint glimmer came round it. Lady Margeson clung to me, and I could hear the others breathe. The glimmer grew brighter, and something black, the shape of a tall man, came from the darkness. There was a pale light where his body would be, and a bright star at the end of something in his hand, but his face was invisible. He moved slowly toward us.

"Save me!" the stranger shrieked.

"Save me!"

"Yes," said a deep, mocking voice. "Save him if you can."

There was a movement in the darkness. Harding sprang at the shape and reeled back with a groan. There was another movement, and I knew that Mrs. Harding had caught him in her arms.

"Where is your science?" the mocking voice asked. "Why doesn't it save him?"

"Save me!" the stranger shrieked again.

I drew my revolver stealthily from my pocket. I had no real hope of harming the devil, but, with that despairing voice ringing in my ears I had to do something. As I raised the revolver a sharp pang shot through me. My arm was numbed and the revolver fell to the floor. I sank back in my chair; and Lady Margeson sobbed suddenly with her head on my shoulder.

"The third time I shall strike harder," the shape said in a fierce voice. "Is there anyone who will still dispute my right to this man?"

There was a breathless silence. Then someone moved. A ray of light flashed upon Mrs. Harding, pale and erect.

"There is God," she cried. "God!"

She held a little black cross aloft for a moment, then threw it with a hysterical shriek toward the devil. There was a metallic ring; and suddenly the light that glimmered from

him went out. There was a pause of a pulse-beat—two—three—then something fell with a dull thud. We made no motion for I do not know how long. At last Harding staggered to the window, pulled up the blind and let the faint moonshine in, and Lady Margeson and I groped round the room hand in hand till we found the knob for the electric light and turned it on. The stranger was motionless and half fainting in his chair. The devil lay dead on the floor. He was not much of a devil when one came to look at him; a tall, gaunt man with a cruel, wolfish mouth and a wicked, mocking smile. His pockets were full of electric batteries and accumulators, and his body was twined round with electric wires. An electric rod had fallen from his hands. He had given Harding and myself shocks with that.

"It is Wilder, of course," Harding said. "He chose this way of torment-

ing you for ten years—the cross caught among the wires and disarranged the flow of the currents, and they passed through his heart and killed him. It was a lucky accident that it struck just there."

Mrs. Harding came slowly forward and took her husband's hand.

"It was God who guided it," she said, with gentle firmness. "The God whom I must follow evermore."

Harding shook his head slowly and sighed.

"God—if there be a God—" he said, "be merciful to us who cannot see Him. Follow the light that is given you, dear, as we will follow ours."

Lady Margeson looked at me, and I raised her fingers to my lips.

"I follow the God of our fathers," I said; and she buried her face upon my shoulder.

"Your God!" she sobbed, "and mine!"



MEAN, MEANER, MEANEST

THREE were four of them in the smoking-compartment of the car when the traveler from Chicago happened to say: "That reminds me of a man out in my town who is so mean that he makes the members of his house write small hands, in order to save ink."

"A friend o' my faather's, suh, wuz even wus than that," came promptly from the Baltimorean. "He stopped the clocks at night, suh, because o' the wear and tear on the works."

Then the Philadelphian: "Well, there's a good old Quaker out in Wayne who won't read the papers. Wears out his glasses, says he."

All three looked inquiringly at the man from New York, but he merely smiled and rang for the waiter to take the orders.



A HURRIED VISIT

SHE—Have you ever been in Europe, Mr. Speaker?

He—Only for a few minutes. I passed through there once in an automobile.

A BALLADE OF THE FOURTEENTH

HO! Poet, bring a lyric new
 To catch and captivate,
 And with a love of love imbue
 Some callous Nell or Kate.
 Whate'er your theme, don't hesitate
 Thus to inform your lay,
 For 'tis to help me celebrate
 St. Valentine, his day.

Ho! Gardener, bring flowers blue
 And red—to indicate
 My heart's unwaveringly true
 And briskly animate.
 And—taking notice of the date—
 Blend these in a bouquet
 To help me fitly celebrate
 St. Valentine, his day.

Confectioner, I crave of you
 The best you can create
 In sweets of pure and crystal dew
 And flavors delicate.
 Send these packed in a golden crate
 Bedecked with ribbons gay,
 To help me fitly celebrate
 St. Valentine, his day.

And finally, O laggard Fate,
 Lot me a lass, I pray!
 Elsewise, how *can* I celebrate
 St. Valentine, his day?

EDWARD W. BARNARD.



THE CURE THAT CURES

“AND they have a gold cure for the liquor habit there, too,” said the man who had just returned from Dawson City.
 “What!” exclaimed the incredulous one; “a gold cure ‘way up there?”
 “You can bet it is,” replied the traveler. “With beer at fifty cents a drink and red whisky a dollar a finger, intemperance is rapidly decreasing.”

CAROLINE AND THE BISHOP

By Catharine Mathews

CONSTANTIA spread out her hands with a gesture of repudiating all responsibility connected with any event which might have taken place in the history of the world since chaos took definite form.

The impression she seemed desirous of conveying was that, through no fault of her own, all well-regulated and easily understood things had been swept away and that chaos once more reigned supreme, but as yet I was wholly unenlightened concerning the situation, save that Constantia had twice given utterance to the plaintive exclamation:

"The poor, dear bishop—how could he let himself be so carried away!"

I am used to Constantia, it being now some twenty-odd years since I became Mr. Constantia, if I may so describe myself, and I was therefore reasonably sure that if I refrained from hurrying her into explanations it would shortly become clear to me not only by whom the dear bishop had been carried away, but also whither he had been carried.

Constantia is the best, the most affectionate of wives, and has me on her mind to a perfectly proper extent, but all that portion of her mind which is not occupied by me and my affairs is weighted down with anxiety concerning the cathedral, the dear bishop and the welfare of the diocese.

We are constantly engaged in perfecting plans for the health and happiness of all three, and of late we have devoted no small portion of our time and skill to marrying the dear bishop to Mrs. Peter Cantear, Constantia being firmly persuaded that this is

eminently desirable no less for the cathedral and the diocese than for the dear bishop himself. Of Mrs. Peter Cantear I can only say that she appears to back Constantia in the matter, the bishop appears quiescent, as a bishop properly should, and I—I back everybody; it gains me popularity for the moment and requires the least mental exertion. The one disturbing element is Caroline.

Caroline is Constantia's niece, and though she is adorable I thank heaven she is not *my* niece, or Constantia would certainly blame me for disturbances due to Caroline's vivacious influences.

Vivacity may be carried to a fault, Constantia says, and Caroline holds as well some most unorthodox views, contending, for example, that bishops are human, and that Mrs. Peter Cantear is a prim bundle of worn-out platitudes. If Caroline, so pretty, so brilliant and so gay, may be compared to anything so disagreeable as a thorn, I should certainly say she was the one thorn of Constantia's otherwise satisfactory life.

That Caroline was to blame for the present crisis I guessed even before I was informed, but that Mrs. Peter Cantear had witnessed the whole affair was a mischance for which I was unprepared. And then the moon—I had forgotten that there was a moon, but, of course, being so, it gave the thing away with a completeness which no diplomacy of Constantia's could ever hope to set straight again. The stars in their courses fought against her, and wasn't it precisely like Mrs. Peter Cantear to be in exactly the

wrong place at exactly the wrong moment?

I said as much to Constantia, but learned I had misplaced the blame; but for Caroline, it seemed, Mrs. Peter Cantear might have been anywhere, and at any time, without the present disastrous consequences. Disastrous was the word, said Constantia, yes, certainly, *disastrous*.

It began, the disastrous circumstance, like a great many other unfortunate occurrences, in the most innocent possible way. What could be more harmless than an evening guild meeting in the parish house, what more suggestive of good works and peace of spirit? What could be more uplifting? It evidently so wrought upon the bishop that he desired a season of peaceful communion with himself to offset it, and, declining the offer of Mrs. Peter Cantear's sleigh to convey him home, he set off with that youthful, elastic step that so belied his fifty years and was so entirely characteristic of the bishop.

The cold, though intense, was brisk and bracing, the snow gave out that creaking sound beneath his tread which we always associate with Christmas and with cheeriness, and which gives to most of us that delicious nostalgia for the things we left behind us with our childhood. The moon shone over all with an unequalled brilliance.

"A perfect night," said the bishop as he turned to say good night to Mrs. Peter Cantear; and Mrs. Peter Cantear agreed. She did not then know it for a night whose perfection was to be marred for her by a tremendous dint from an unkind fate, and besides she made it an invariable rule to agree entirely and enthusiastically with whatever the dear bishop said, unless to disagree would be the sincerest flattery.

I judge that Mrs. Peter Cantear had been quite congratulating herself over her bishop as she stood on the steps of the parish house and said good night to him. Contemplating his well-built figure, his quiet, handsome face, with

the kindly eyes and firm mouth and chin, and the close-cut gray hair, which adds so much to his dignity and presence, Mrs. Peter Cantear may be forgiven for estimating the bishop far above all the other bishops, priests and deacons for desirability; and for shaking hands with herself, as the vulgar phrase goes, over the pleasant fact that he was destined by the general fitness of things and the infallibility of Constantia to be *her* bishop.

What the bishop was thinking of as he walked away is no concern of ours. Had we been meant to read our neighbors' thoughts Nature would doubtless have devised for us some way to discover them. That she neglected to provide the means was perhaps one of her broad hints, which it would be well sometimes to take.

At any rate the bishop proceeded without let or hindrance until he came to the top of the McVickars' hill, down whose smooth white glistening length the world and his wife were busily and merrily engaged in coasting. Oh, it is quite the swagger thing — everyone is coasting this winter. People give coasting parties with a little supper after, very smart and jolly; but of course Constantia, belonging as she does to the cathedral set, does not approve of it for herself or me. Still, I hear of it through Caroline.

When the bishop arrived at the top of the hill he would doubtless have given no thought to the frivolity beyond a gentle regret, had not the imp of mischance been lurking there in the impenetrable disguise of Caroline. I seem to be unavoidably rude to Caroline in my comparisons.

I have always remarked that the elements, usually considered so detrimental to a woman's appearances, seemed slavishly devoted to enhancing that radiance which is Caroline's charm. Is there a high wind? It whips her hair into bewitching little tendrils of curls and brings the roses to her cheeks. Is there rain? Caroline defies it, and coquettes with it, and declares moisture highly beneficial and proves it becoming. So I make no

doubt that last night a little of the powdery snow was lying on her dark furs, emphasizing the setting they made for her pretty face, and if a flake or two had caught on her long black lashes and made even more brilliant the sparkle of her eyes, it is no wonder the bishop was carried away.

But, dear me! when Constantia used the expression I never dreamed of so literal an interpretation. I can hardly even yet realize that the bishop could so completely forget the cathedral, the diocese, the Episcopal Example and his fifty years. The remembrance of one or other of them should have stayed with him, one would think. But they fled him completely, it appears, and before the astonished eyes of Mrs. Peter Cantear, driving sedately home in her sedately appointed sleigh, was revealed the amazing sight of Caroline and the bishop, coasting merrily down the icy expanse of hill on a little sled, whose lack of space caused them to cling to each other in a manner which showed far more regard for their personal safety than for the Episcopal dignity.

Picture it to yourself if you can; to me, even, it seems a profanity on the part of Caroline; to Constantia it is as if the cathedral itself had been seen sliding down hill on Ranny McVickar's little "bob," while to Mrs. Peter Cantear we may well believe it was what the crash of the worlds will be when the elements which keep them in their places dissolve.

A crash indeed it ended in, for the bishop, being more accustomed to steering guild meetings than small sleds, made some wrong calculation in endeavoring to avoid a collision with Mrs. Peter Cantear's sleigh. He was forced by the stress of circumstance to swerve and deviate from that straightness of path which he was so insistent in recommending to his cathedral flock, with the result that, with an incredible swiftness, Caroline, the bishop and the sled were overturned and mixed suddenly and completely with a quantity of soft snow.

No one, myself least of all, would

deny that Mrs. Peter Cantear was a much and sorely tried lady. It was shock enough to her nerves and ideals to see her own revered Episcopal property being made, as it were, a sport of circumstance—being flung, breathless and hatless, into a snow-bank. Shock enough had the disastrous circumstance—I quote Constantia—ended there; but the bishop arose with haste, and with devoted care he extricated Caroline from the confusion of sled and snow.

"My own darling," said he, with an entire disregard of Mrs. Peter Cantear's proximity, "my own darling, tell me that you are not hurt!" And with that he tenderly kissed her upturned, laughing face. I have mentioned before that there was a certain youthful elasticity about the bishop!

"Mrs. Cantear is ill, positively ill from the shock," said Constantia. "I have a note from her here." She held up a sheet of lavender-tinted paper faintly suggestive of subdued mourning.

"It is all most extraordinary—no one but the dear bishop can explain it. I never expect *Caroline* to explain anything."

"And the bishop has not been heard from since?" said I. "I know that Caroline survived the shock better than Mrs. Peter Cantear, for she was in her usual spirits at the breakfast table.

"He called this morning," said Constantia, "and asked for *Caroline*. She is in the morning-room with him now; and I hope she has had the grace to apologize."

"In my day, my dear," I suggested, "when a man kissed a girl inadvertently, he, and not she, was the one to apologize."

Constantia crushed me with a word. "A *man*, yes," said she; "but this was the *bishop*!"

I am really afraid I must have caught some of Caroline's unorthodox views about bishops, not to have known the difference without the explanation; but before I had a chance to ponder over Constantia's words the library door opened suddenly and the pair in ques-

tion—Caroline and the bishop—stood upon the threshold. I suppose I should have put the bishop first, but already Caroline was making him a background—a distinguished, middle-aged background—for her own vivacious charm.

Nevertheless, it was the bishop who spoke, and never had I seen his face so illumined with happiness. It would seem that emotions possessed the bishop which I could best understand and interpret by recalling a certain far-away day when I had stood with Constantia on the threshold of *her* uncle's library and undergone the same emotions myself.

"My dear friends," said the bishop

in his best cathedral voice—in fact, he came so near intoning it that for a moment I wondered what was coming—"my dear friends, I know you will rejoice with me in my happiness when I tell you that our dear Caroline has consented to honor me by becoming my wife."

I am trying to appear properly depressed before Constantia, but, speaking freely to the outside world, I think that Providence has been good, very kind and good, to the cathedral, to the diocese, and, above all, to the dear bishop himself, and I know that the dear bishop thinks so too.



IN WHITE SAMITE

I THANK thee, dear, for all thou hast not given,
For all the sayings thou hast left unsaid;
Thou'st loved me with thy silence and thy shunning,
And I—I've loved my dream of thee instead.

Still we have loved—have hungered for each other,
Have trod alone—and this, for love's dread sake;
Never to prove love's measure, lest it fail us,
Never to know—and this, lest one heart break!

L. F. T.



CAUSE FOR DISMISSAL

DYER—Why did you discharge your chauffeur?
DUELL—He was a member of the Humane Society.



ALL the world's a stage, and a good many of us like to take a drink between the acts.

AN APPROXIMATION

By Susan Keating Glaspell

HE put the letter down, questioning whether upon land or upon sea there were any human beings who were gracious without hope of reward. A native fair-mindedness forced from her the admission that an impulsive few did not anticipate the sense of obligation they were subsequently going to inspire, but in her present attitude toward things she was not willing to grant to many of those few a soul proof against latter-day opportunities for the exactation of what they could construe as their due.

After making a number of unsuccessful attempts to forget the letter, she concluded that she might as well read it again. It ran:

MY DEAR MISS FALKNER—

First—congratulations. While I always knew the great things were there, I will confess you have surprised even me in the rapidity with which you have proved yourself. It is glorious, and I watched you Monday night with many thrills of gratification.

Now, I have a request to make. You have always been kind in saying I was the first of the critics to take up your cause. I did it because I believed in you and not, as I am sure you know, for hope of reward. But because of all that, I know that while my request may seem to you surprising you will not regard it as presumptuous.

We simply must have some new features—more of the personal, and—if you will not tell on me—the sensational. Call it what you may, it's the stuff people want to read. And so I have mapped out a little "stunt" for you. Won't you write for me a brief sketch that will work in under the heading, "The Happiest Moments of My Life"? If you haven't time to write it, make a sort of outline, and I'll fix it up. You can make it somewhat in the nature of a review of your various dramatic triumphs—how you felt about this word of encouragement, or that bit of recognition. It's being done

now right along, and you may be sure I would not ask it if I felt it would be at all cheapening.

Congratulating you again, and once more giving myself the joy of saying, "I told you so," I remain,

Your very good friend,
HERBERT LACEY.

The amusing side of it was, after all, not to be ignored. There passed before her a long array of people who had befriended her in her struggling days crowding up now with the prefatory, "While we did it without hope of reward, at the same time—"; and that sense which permitted her to get the humor from the disagreeable as well as the pleasant made her hope, mindful of such genera as hair tonic advertisements, that her list of benefactors had not extended too far beyond her own sphere of action.

But in returning to it with seriousness she found that her insight into its humorous possibilities had lifted from her nothing of the hurt. She had long believed in Herbert Lacey's disinterested friendship, in his absolutely sincere desire to see her succeed. She knew, and she knew that he knew, that she had grown beyond his paper, and that it was a compromise of her dignity which he asked. He was sure, of course, that she would do it. In that he was taking advantage of her temperament as well as of the situation, and even a reaching out to the possibility of his being desperately hard pressed did not make it right.

There were a number of letters upon her desk, and after she had read them all she let herself dwell for the minute upon how unquestionably they stood for success. There was one from

an actress of advanced years which pleased her most of all.

"After I watched your work on Monday night," she wrote, "I felt for the first time in many years that the art I love so well is in safe hands. There was joy for me in your work, my dear Olive Falkner. Your sincerity, your unmistakable devotion, your high purpose, your glorious ideals—oh, it was fine to feel it all after this reign of tinsel and red lights! May you go on and on to bigger things, and may you never forget the sacredness of your trust."

Her fancy was reaching out into strange recesses as she made ready for the night. And then for a long time she sat there turning over the letters upon her desk. It was when she found she had taken the long tablet and folded some sheets across the middle, simulating notepaper, and had taken up her pen and opened the ink bottle, that she determined she would do it then and there. There was in her mind a half-formulated theory that the sooner it was done the sooner she could begin to forget it. Her mouth was set in the firm lines of one discharging a despised duty, as she began:

"Perhaps one of the first moments to stand out as among the happy ones of my life was when Dedrick admitted me to his school. He had me do a couple of things for him, and then he said, 'Oh, yes—I guess you may come.' And as I went away that day I was very happy.

"And on the night of my first appearance, small though the part was, I knew one of my happy moments. After it was over, the manager was pouring out wrath upon some of the people, when I came along and he said, 'Now, you—your work wasn't half bad.' And, grudging though it was, it made me happy.

"Then there was my big stroke of luck in getting on with Merriman. I never worked so hard in my life as I did getting ready for that. He is not what one would call a gracious gentleman, but after the second night he

said to me, 'I think you are going to do very well,' and I went away so happy I scarcely touched the earth.

"And then—let me see—my first good notice. It was in *The Searcher*. It said: 'Olive Falkner, as Nancy, is doing good work. She is capable of better things. Indeed, she is a young woman of rare possibilities. We shall hear more of her, and soon.'"

And so it went with steady swing from the struggler to the star; a mere record of the dramatic stepping-stones—conventional, but, in a sense, honest, and done with the same freedom from emotion there would have been in the jotting of a memorandum in her engagement-book. At the close she wrote:

"But perhaps the happiest moment of all was when the curtain went down on the first production of 'The Unforgotten' the other night, and I knew by the long, long applause that the work I wished most to do was approved by the people I wished most of all to please."

She read it over with a smile which shifted from the cynical to the tolerant. It was after she had darkened the room and was lying there, hands clasped upon her forehead, that there was borne in upon her a sharp consciousness of what, if not its insincerity, was at any rate the preposterous and the farcical in it. "The Happiest Moments of My Life!" The lights from a building opposite were throwing it in tracery upon the ceiling, and beyond the glints and the shadows, beyond what she could fancy as the letters and the words, there floated the whole great land of longing and dreams. A something long and sternly held beneath was crowding up within her. Up through the strata of conventions, of training and of ambition it crowded, until her eyes—wide, deep eyes, empowered with the telling of heart stories—were blinded, until sobs were in her throat, and until at last she was sitting up in bed, her head upon her knees, her long hair falling all about her, and was sobbing with the tumultuousness long repression alone can foster.

And then it was with the defiance springing from strong emotion that she threw back the covering and stepped to the floor. She stood there a minute, peering into the shadows like a wilful child who is half fearful and yet a little desirous of being caught. It was with a quick drawing in of her breath, an impulsive reaching out of her hand, that she stole over and sat down before her desk. She did not turn on the light—she just sat there, hands clasped before her, letting the all she had long desired sweep in and possess her.

And then at last she did reach up and turn on the light by her desk. She took those folded sheets of paper she had written a little while before, and, one by one, turned them over on the other side. Then, dreamily, her hand not steady, she wrote the heading, "The Happiest Moments of My Life." Her smile grew tremulous as she looked down at it; but when the mists had gone from her eyes the lights deep within were passionate and wonderful. And outside was that subdued state which stands for quiet in a great city, and just before she began to write she looked about again as though half expectant of being caught. And then this is what she wrote, fine, soft lights upon her face, the letters of congratulation lying unheeded around her, many a smile and many a tear born with the fast coming, resistless words:

"You funny old don't-care world! —are you in earnest about wanting me to tell of the happiest moments of my life? It's a strange thing to ask, dear, queer world, but perhaps you mean it; and, as you've done quite a lot for me, I think maybe I should do this little bit for you.

"There is a joy in realized ambition. Yes, there is joy in hearing so much applause that it makes one's head swim in having to go before the curtain again and again and again and then having a fight with the manager because he wants you to go once more and you don't want to. There is the kind of joy in that which makes you straighten up your shoulders and hold

your head very high. There is joy in forcing from the great critics the very things they are most reluctant to say. Reading their comments is like drawing in great breaths of pure air after you have been stifling. Oh, yes, there's joy in it, and I guess—yes, I know full well, it's worth working for. And there's great joy in doing something that pleases oneself, in feeling you are beginning to fulfil yourself, in interpreting to your own satisfaction, in—oh, you know what I'm talking about now! I am talking of artistic gratification, and it's worth having. It's a fine, high kind of joy that makes up for a great deal of work.

"But, dear old world, aren't we getting very much mixed up? That is not what you were asking me about—not ambition, success, the joy of doing and winning. Oh, no, that wasn't it. You were asking about happiness, and don't you know—oh, surely you do! —that happiness hasn't anything to do with the clapping of hands or with the things that appear in print?

"It's a little queer to come to me about it, for of course I don't know as much of it as most women do. Most women just make a business of being happy, and I have had to make a business of the other things. But perhaps that is the very reason I can tell of it better than they. They are too submerged in it to tell of it. But with me—oh, the things I do know about it stand out big and distinct and glowing, and I can see that perhaps I understand it all the better for not being immersed in it.

". . . I was so little I could not much more than walk, and a grown-up lady, a beautiful lady she was to me, was bending over me and putting a doll in my lap, and she was saying to me, 'Auntie brought this for baby, because auntie loves baby very much.' Don't you think, world, if you were a little baby girl without a mother, or without much of anybody, that you'd like to have a beautiful lady come and say that to you? And don't you think, if it was the first time you had ever felt

just like throwing your arms about anybody's neck, that you would look back to it as one of the very happy moments of your life?

" . . . It was almost a mile away from our house—that river. I went up a hill and then down a hill, and then across a little stretch of level—and there it was. I am not sure most people would call it a beautiful river, but I do know that it looked beautiful to me. I couldn't go very often, for there is lots of work to do on a farm; yet sometimes, when the dinner work was done and it wasn't time to begin on supper, I could go. And one day—oh, I couldn't tell how happy that day was!—I got away at two o'clock, and I wouldn't have to be back until five. Someone had given me a book. It was in a paper cover, and I have read since that it is not very good poetry; but I never cared so much for any book before, and I've never cared for one in just that way again. I rowed about in that rickety old boat—most of the time not rowing at all—and I read in that book about old castles and about men who died for love of women. And then, just before I went home, I lay down in the bottom of the boat and I held the book in my hands; but I did not read it, for my eyes were shut and I could hear the water lapping all about me, and I could hear birds singing, and I could feel myself drifting—drifting—drifting. And as I drifted I dreamed a wonderful dream of myself in an old gray castle, and of a man who loved me. I was scolded when I reached home that day, for it was long after five o'clock; but do you think I cared? There's never been a scolding yet that could rub away the glory from a dream!

"And then, world, did you ever have a chum? I suppose not—you are so far away from everything you could chum with. I had one once—just one, but if I am to tell of the happy moments of my life then I shall have to tell about that little chum. If you had always been told that you were queer; if all your life you had known the great, heavy pain of lone-

liness; and then if one day soon after you had come to the city, and when it all seemed—oh, so don't-care and foolish!—a girl in the class who was always smiling, who was always saying things to make other people laugh, were to come to you and ask you if you wouldn't room with her, and say she had rather room with you than anybody—don't you think, as you stood looking down into her brave, beautiful face, that that would mark itself upon your soul as one of the very happy moments of your life? If no one had ever wanted you before, and then if a little girl with big gray eyes, a little girl who could laugh and be strong, came right up to you and said she wanted you very much, don't you think you could just feel something thawing in your heart, and don't you think a new and beautiful light would shed itself back over all the years of the past and on and on into the unlived years of the future? Yes, world, if you want the truth—then here it is! I stood tonight before a great theatre crowded with people, and they were the people who are most worth while. As I stood there with one hand upon the curtain, looking out across the mass of them, I knew, not so much by the clapping of the hands as by a something tingling in the atmosphere, that it was a moment of far-reaching success. I liked it, world—oh, yes, I liked it. But as among the happy moments of my life it is not so much as given place with that day long ago when, poor and unknown, I found a friend.

"And what did we do, my little chum and I? I'll tell you what we did! We lived and worked and dreamed and played together. We rode on the street-cars! Did you ever know that was a wonderfully exhilarating, a beautiful, restful thing to do? I don't often ride on the street-cars now, and when I do I ride just stupidly—just for the sake of getting somewhere; but that was not the way I rode in those days of long ago. No—this was the way we did it then. After we had eaten our dinner—we

paid twenty-five cents for those dinners—and just at the hour when wine was flowing, when all over the big city there were soft lights and music and women in laces and diamonds—just at that very hour of striving for much show my chum would say to me, 'I've got twenty cents—let's take a ride.' And then we would get the very front seat on the car—often we had to let three or four cars go by to do it, but we would have felt untrue to our ideals in taking any other.

"There was just room for two on that front seat, and the air would fairly swim up against our faces as we sat there, deciding the people in the carriages and the automobiles were not getting as much from life as we were. 'What do they understand?' my chum would say to me, and then we would laugh, and we would talk of the things we wanted to do in the world, for we dreamed big dreams in those street-car days. And that car would rush on and on, clear out into the country, just pushing us straight into the night, and there was one place for almost a mile where the trees came right down over us, and we could hear crickets, and could look into big, dense darkness. We loved that place, my chum and I, and some nights when we came to it we were very still, and at other times we would say little poems to each other, poems we loved most of all. And then we would go back to our room and work.

"Oh, big, queer world, those were happy moments in my life! How sorry I am for the people who have never known the joy there can be in riding on street-cars!—the people who have never known the bliss of saving their money for a week and then getting a real dollar seat at the theatre!—the poor, dull rich people who have never lived through the joy of eating at cheap places for two weeks just for the sake of going at last to a place they like most of all, and with princely abandonment paying more to the waiter than they usually pay for their dinner! There's tragedy in missing all of that, dear world, and in my inmost

heart there is lots and lots of pity for the poor, sleek, prosperous people who have never known the plunging joy of paying ten cents for coffee when they knew they should have paid but five!

"And do you want me to tell of the most thankfully happy moment I ever had in all my life? She got sick—that brave-hearted little chum who had brought so much of light to me. They took her away to the hospital, and for three weeks, dizzy with fear, helpless at thought of what might be before me, I went up those big steps every night when my work was done, and I would stand and look at the nurse, and in answer to my look the nurse would only shake her head. And then one night—I had scarcely worked at all that day, for the nurse had shaken her head so very slowly the night before—I was afraid to go into the big place, and I just sat there on the front steps with my face in my hands; and when at last I did get up the steps and down the long corridor my feet would not take me to the room, and I stood there leaning against the wall, my heart beating itself to suffocation one minute and not beating at all the next. And then, just as I felt everything slipping from under me, the nurse came out and took my hand, and she said to me: 'It's good news at last, dear. The doctor says she's going to be all right.' And then I walked into the room very quietly. Upon the bed my chum was lying restfully asleep, and I sat down on a chair at the foot of the bed, leaned my head up against the iron rods and held my two hands tight in my lap. Tears and tears and tears rolled down my face. Don't talk to me of the night I found myself a star! Oh, no—that wasn't it; it was the night I sat there by my chum's bed and softly cried out my joy of keeping her that I knew the moment of my life most thankfully happy.

" . . . Shall we leave it here?—leave the rest of it—the big, big rest of it—unsaid? That is what we do with the innermost things of life, world. Words cannot hold them, and so we

keep them close within our hearts, where no one knows that they are. Did you ever think how the unwritten stories, the unsung poems, are the greatest of them all? Too great to be sung or written, they are only to be lived, world—only to be lived. And so each heart has its own song and story, and it feeds upon it until the heart is cold and needs to feed no more.

"It was in the mountains—I have always been glad of that. It was two years ago, as time is reckoned, but sometimes I wake in the morning to think it was the day before; and sometimes, so much a part of me it is, I think it was a thousand eternities ago. If there was something which could begin where words stop then perhaps I could tell of that place in the mountains. I can only say now that it was high up—close to the stars and to heaven, and that one could look far—oh, far!—and that the world of petty struggles was off in another sphere—that here great, strong breaths from God blew in upon one's soul, and that one grew bigger and stronger and freer and truer every time one stood and looked off at the haze there was on distant mountain tops. Don't ask me to tell of it, world—no, don't! I know now, what before I guessed, that the greatest things of life must remain forever the unexpressed; but just let me say to you that the happiest moment of my life, the glorified, supreme, never-to-be-dimmed moment was when he and I, very early one morning, climbed higher on the mountain side than we had ever climbed before—on and on until at last we stood upon the top; and then, his hand in mine, we stood there, above the mists, above the things that make men blind, and we knew then that the spirit of love had descended upon our hearts, and that henceforth forevermore we were of love's elect. Oh, world—wonderful and cruel!—they came the next day and took me away. They had subscribed to stock in my future—those people who believed they were my friends—and, you see, world, they don't let race-

horses browse in country lanes. It's the half a second some day in the future—not the browsing by the way. And so they told him, told him in the way people of a cold philosophy can tell things, that he could show he cared for me only by going away and letting me alone. For he was of your dreamers, and not your doers, world; and so, believing he was serving me, he went away. And I? Oh, I went back to the market-place. I have done the things we all knew I could do. I have won the place we all knew I could win. But, men and women of a cold philosophy, your victory was but a sorry one! You do not know that there blows over me still that strong, fine breath from the mountains, and you do not know that in dreams I shall ever stand high upon that mountain top, the mists and the struggles far below me, the man I love close, close beside me. Not much of life, you say, oh, heart of mine? But try to be content. With other women love may have stayed a longer time, but perhaps to them love did not come so perfectly.

"You'll not laugh at my little story, will you, big heart of the world? Perhaps it is not so much of a story as most women's hearts could yield to you, but I sometimes wonder if unfinished stories do not have their compensations. The yearning heart, knowing much has been denied it, returns and satisfies itself in sounding new depths in the little that it had. And so, may it not be that those who have lived what men would call little have lived more profoundly than those who have lived what men would call much? If the story be not a long one, then the heart, not to be cheated, makes the short story yield the more. Mine was a short story, but it has yielded me much. Lean close to me now, dear world, and listen while I whisper—for I am very tired tonight and lonely—that I thank God for my dreams!"

A breeze from without stirred her papers. Her pen trembled for a minute in her fingers and then fell to the

floor. Her head drooped lower and lower, until at last it rested upon the things she had written, and she lay there many minutes motionless. Then a clock struck four, and the voice of the market-place admonished her of a rehearsal in the morning at eleven. There was a paper-cutter on the desk, and slowly, for she was numb with weariness, she cut those long sheets she had folded hours before and arranged them side by side. Upon the one was the conventional statement of her dramatic triumphs, upon the other the story of her woman's heart. She took the first, folded it and put it away, saying: "I will send it tomorrow. He can

fix it up somehow. It is the best I can do." She held those other sheets of paper in her hand for just a minute, and then, very slowly now, she tore them into strips and threw them into the basket that was beside her desk. And then at last, spent with much feeling, the favorite of the city, she whom many women envied went to sleep.

When, a week later, Olive Falkner's sketch, "The Happiest Moments of My Life," was printed and copied everywhere there were critics of vaunted insight who pointed to it as betokening the perfect type of the woman devoted solely to her art.



ARISTOCRACY

MR. BACKBAY SMITHERS—Blood counts; one of my ancestors was present at the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

MR. ISAAC MOSESSON—Pshaw, dat's nodings. Vun of my ancestors vas brezent ad de signing uv de Ten Commandments.



BOBBIE'S MISTAKE

JACK—You say you have accepted Bobbie Van Dough? I—er—certainly thought you intended to accept *me!*

IDA—Er—yes—I imagine poor Bobbie thought so, too!



THE ETERNAL FEMININE

“**C**HAUFFEUR?”

“Yes, madam?”

“Is my number on straight?”

A FLORAL VALENTINE

OLD Terra Firma sternly eyed
 This minx who said she knew him,
 And wondered where he'd met before
 This madcap trying to woo him,
 And grumbled at her sighing and
 The kisses that she threw him.

Then Dawning Spring grew desperate,
 Shed tears upon his shoulder;
 Till Terra Firma, greatly shocked,
 Quite tersely up and told her
 He hoped that less demonstrative
 She'd act as she got older!

But, lo! one telltale valentine
 Our daring maid indited;
 That little snowdrop on his lap
 Stern Terra Firma sighted;
 It touched him to the heart, he said,
 Such love from one he'd slighted!

He primped and preened and straight assumed
 A buoyancy belated,
 And on her hurried marriage, Spring
 Was soon interrogated;
 "He begged so hard, I had to," she
 Invariably related!

JOHN ARBUTHNOTT.



WHY HE WAS SKEPTICAL

FULLER—I understand Miss Homeleigh's uncle died a year ago and left her a million dollars.

WARREN—I doubt it. Her engagement has never been announced.



MARRIAGE is a gamble, but no more so than is singleness.

NEAR A GARDEN WALL

By Virginia Osborne Moroso

IN a half doze Idaho Shorty lay astretch in the shadow of a honeysuckled wall, his paunch filled with the generous handout from the villa on the other side, his nostrils drinking in the heavy perfume of the vines over his head, and his face and brow cooled in the morning breezes.

Life was so full of sweetness to him now that he even forgot that there was no sign of male humanity about the beautiful summer residence on the other side of the low wall.

Occasionally, through the intoxicating and languorous odor of the honeysuckle there crept the faint, sweet breath of distant pines, for there had been a rain during the night and the trees were breathing freely and living with a fulness of sweetness equal only to that the sybaritic soul of Shorty was reveling in.

From the open, wide windows of the drawing-room of the house came the sounds of music. The young mistress was playing a strange melody, one that changed suddenly and surprisingly from brilliance to sadness. Shorty did not know it, but he was listening to an admirable performance of Reinhold's "Impromptu," and his half doze was rapidly becoming a stupor when he heard yet sweeter music and nearer—the voices of two women just on the other side of the low wall.

"Don't you fear the nearness of that tramp?" asked one voice.

"Dear me, mother," was the reply, "the poor fellow was hungry and we couldn't send him away without break-

fast. John has a pipe he always lends the tramps when they have finished eating."

"But all the menservants are off on a holiday."

"The coachman will be back from the station in an hour."

Shorty nodded benevolently. He was right. He could carry off the grand piano if he only felt equal to the exertion. But he could hardly exert himself to harken to these soft and low voices so near him or to the melody, the strange melody, coming from the open, wide windows.

Shorty's soul was steeped in ethereal and perfumed waves, and it seemed as if the melody lingering in the air came from the rich greensward which cushioned his huge body.

Very dim and distant sounded the music, and dimmer yet seemed the chattering of the women's voices.

Surely he was dreaming.

At his hand was a fortune in unset pearls. Someone seemed to be offering them to him. They were of exquisite form, perfect maiden jewels, untouched by setting of gold.

Shorty moved an arm and stretched it. His red eyelids uplifted.

He saw no pearls, but he heard, as it seemed to him, repeated constantly the words: "Precious pearls! Pearls! Pearls! Priceless pearls!"

"Six of them, mother," came from a woman's voice across the wall.

"Beautiful! Beautiful!"

"Look, mother, how perfect! No woman ever had the like of these!"

Shorty sat up and looked up and down the road and then at the honeysuckled top of the wall.

"I can't help but feel a fear that the tramp may be near us."

"Don't worry, mother. The poor fellow is trudging along far away from here now, and William will be back in a half-hour."

"But he could take everything we have and escape."

"The only thing I'd mind losing would be these precious pearls, and they are safe."

Shorty had digested his breakfast and had worn off the edge of his sybaritic snooze. The strange melody had ceased and the sun's rays were causing the honeysuckles to shrink. There was only increasing heat and the familiar smell of the pines. Shorty was himself again. He looked again up and down the road and whispered to himself:

"It's a shame! It's too easy!"

"Look, mother, they are the most beautiful jewels the good God ever let mortal possess!" exclaimed the sweet voice on the other side.

There was another agreeable sound

in the dim distance—the whistle of a freight—and Shorty knew just how long it would take him to finish his job and catch it.

The long and strong fingers of the tramp clutched the top of the wall through the vines, and in a second he had drawn his head and shoulders to the top.

Another and nearer shriek of the freight bade Shorty hurry. He gave a twist to his arms and was immediately balanced on the wall so that he could throw himself into the garden easily and quickly.

"I'll count the precious things again, mother," said a radiant young woman speaking to her mother.

"One, two, three, four, five, six!" she said. "But there's another coming."

And as the tramp lowered himself quietly to the road, the tiny white teeth of the baby in the young woman's lap closed on her finger, and Idaho Shorty said:

"Gee!" and smiled as he hurried for the freight.



HARMONIOUS

HELEN—You know they're twins, and they agree in everything.

ALICE—Yes. I notice that they make exactly the same deduction from their age.



HOW PROVIDENCE WORKS

THE village philosopher was holding forth. "Ever see a feller put down a carpet when he didn't want to, with his wife bossin' the job?" he asked. "Ever notice how much oftener he hammers his fingers than the tacks? Ever stop to think what a lightest sort o' blow feels like under sech circumstances? Ever wonder why Mr. Man sticks his finger in his mouth every whack he gives it? Guessed it was to stop the blood, I s'pose? No, siree. Thet's Providence a-workin'. Thumbs in mouths is God's way o' stoppin' the natural flow o' langwige that might shock modest femininity."

IBSEN THE INDIVIDUALIST

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU"

By James Huneker

FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE has declared that "there can be no tragedy without a struggle; nor can there be genuine emotion for the spectator unless something other and greater than life is at stake." This so exactly defines the dramas of Henrik Ibsen that it might have been written specifically to describe their dramatic and ethical content. Whatever else Ibsen's works may be, they are first soul dramas; the human soul is not only their shadowy protagonist, but it is the stake for which his characters breathlessly game throughout the vast halls of his poetic and historic plays and within those modern middle-class apartments, where the atmosphere seems rarefied by the intensity of the struggle. "Greater than life" means for Ibsen the immortal soul—immortal not in the theologic, but generic sense; the soul of the species, which never had a beginning and never can have an end. With this precious entity as pawn on Ibsen's dramatic chess-board, the Brunetière dictum is perfectly fulfilled.

Let us apply to him and his plays a symbol; let us symbolize the arch-symbolist. Ibsen is an open door. The door enacts an important role with him. Nora Helmer, in "A Doll's House," goes out of the door to her new life, and in "The Master Builder" Hilda Wangel, typifying the younger generation, enters to Solness. An open door on the chamber of the spirit is Ibsen. Through it we view the struggle of souls in pain and doubt and wrath. He himself has said that the stage

should be a room with the fourth wall knocked down so that the spectators could see what is going on within the inclosure. A tragic wall is this missing one, for between the listener and the actor there is interposed the soul of the playwright, the soul of Ibsen, which, prism-like, permits us to witness the refractions of his art. This open door, this absent barrier, is it not a symbol?

What does Henrik Ibsen mean to his century? Is he dramatist, symbolist, idealist, optimist, pessimist, poet or realist? Or is he a destructive, a corroding force? Has he constructive gifts—aside from his technical genius? He has been called an anarchic preacher. He has been described as a debaser of the moral coin. He has been ranged far from the angels, and his very poetic gifts have been challenged. Yet the surface pessimism of his plays conceals a mighty belief in the ultimate goodness of mankind. Realist as he is, his dramas are shot through with a highly imaginative symbolism. A Pegasus was killed early under him, as Georg Brandes says; but there remains a rich remnant of poesy. And may there not be deduced from his complete compositions a constructive philosophy that makes for the ennoblement of his fellow-beings?

Ibsen is a reflective poet, one to whom the idea presents itself before the picture; with Shakespeare and Goethe the idea and form were simultaneously born. His art is great and varied, yet it is never exercised as a sheer play of form or color or wit. A

Romantic originally, he pays the tax to Beauty by his vivid symbolism and his rare formal perfections. And a Romantic is always a revolutionist. Embittered in youth—proud, self-contained, reticent—he waged war with life for over a half-century; fought for his artistic ideals as did Richard Wagner; and, like Wagner, he has swept the younger generation along with him. He, the greatest moral artist of his century, Tolstoy not excepted, was reviled for what he had not said or done—so difficult was it to apprehend his new, elusive method. A polemist he is, as were Byron and Shelley, Tolstoy and Dickens, Turgenev and Dostoevsky. Born a Northman, he is melancholic, though not veritably pessimistic of temperament. Moral indignation in him must not be confounded with the pessimism that sees no future hope for mankind. The North breeds mystics. Shakespeare would have made his Hamlet a Scandinavian even if the legendary Hamlet and the earlier play had not existed. The brief white nights, the chilly climate, the rugged, awful scenery react on sensitive natures like Ibsen's. And then the various strains in his blood must not be forgotten—Danish, German, Norwegian and Scotch. Thus we get a gamut of moods—philosophic, poetic, mystic and analytic. And if he too frequently depicts pathologic states, is it not the fault of his epoch? Few dramatists have been more responsive to their century.

II

THE drama is the domain of logic and will; Henry Becque called it "the art of sacrifices." The Ibsen technic is rather tight in the social dramas, but the larger rhythms are nowhere missing. The most artificial of art forms, the drama, is in his hands a mirror of many reverberating lights. The transubstantiation of realities is so smoothly accomplished that one involuntarily remembers Whistler's remark as to art being only great when all traces of the

means used are vanished. Ibsen's technic is a means to many ends. It is effortless in the later plays—it is the speech of emotion, the portrayal of character. "*Qui dit drame, dit caractère,*" writes André Gide. Ibsen's content conditions his form. His art is the result of constraint. He respects the unities of time, place, action, not that he admires the pseudo-classic traditions of Boileau, but because the rigorous excision of the superfluous suits his scheme. Nor is he an extremist in this question of the unities. Like Renan, the artist in him abhors "the horrible mania of certitude." The time-unit in his best plays ranges from one to two days; the locality is seldom shifted further than from room to garden. As he matured his theatrical canvas shrank, the number of his characters diminished. Even the action became less vivacious and various; the exteriorization of emotional states was substituted for the bustling, vigorous life of the earlier plays. Yet—always drama, dynamic not static.

His dialogue—a spoken, never a literary one—varies from extreme naturalism to the half-uttered sentences, broken phrases and exclamations that disclose—as under a burning light—the sorrow and pain of his men and women. One recalls in reading the later pieces the saying of Maurice Barrès, "For an accomplished spirit there is but one dialogue—that between our two egos—the momentary ego that we are and the ideal one toward which we strive." The Ibsen plays are character symphonies. His polyphonic mastery of character is unique in the history of the drama; for, as we shall presently show, there is a second—nay, a third—intention in his dialogue that gives forth endless repercussions of ideas and emotions.

The mental intensity of Ibsen is relentless. Once Arthur Symons, showing Rodin some Blake drawings, told the French sculptor, "Blake used literally to see these figures; they are not mere inventions." "Yes," replied Rodin, "he saw them once; he should have seen them three or four times."

Ibsen's art presents no such wavering vision. He saw his characters not once but for many months continuously before, Paracelsus-like, he allowed them an escape from his chemical retort to the footlights. Some of them are so powerfully realized that their souls shine like living torches.

Ibsen's symbolism is that of Baudelaire: "All nature is a temple filled with living pillars, and the pillars have tongues and speak in confused words, and man walks as through a forest of countless symbols." The dramatist does not merely label our appetites and record our manners, but he breaks down the barrier of flesh, shows the skeleton that upholds it and makes a sign by which we recognize, not alone the poet in the dramatist, but also the god within us. The "crooked sequence of life" has its speech where-with truth may be imaged as beauty. Ibsen loves truth more than beauty, though he does not ignore the latter. With him a symbol is an image and not an abstraction. It is not the pure idea barren and unadorned, but the idea clothed by an image which flashes a signal upon our consciousness. Technically we know that the Norwegian dramatist employs his symbols as a means of illuminating the devious acts and speech of his humans, binding by repetitions the disparate sections and contrasted motives of his play. These symbols are not always leading motives, though they are often so construed; his *leit motiven* are to be sought rather in the modulation of character and the characteristic gestures which express it. With "Rosmersholm" the "white horses" indicate by an image the dark forces of heredity which operate in the catastrophe. The "gold and green forest" in "Little Eyolf" is a symbol of what Rita Allmers brought her husband Alfred, and the resultant misery of a marriage to which the man, through a mistaken idealism, had sold himself. There are such symbols and catchwords in every play. In "Emperor and Galilean" the conquering sun is a symbol for Julian the Apostate, whose destiny, he believes, is conducted

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by the joyous sun; while in "Ghosts" the same sun is for the agonized Oswald Alving the symbol of all he has lost—reason, hope and happiness. Thus the tower in "The Master Builder," the open door in "A Doll's House," the ocean in "The Lady of the Sea," give a homogeneity which the otherwise loose structure of the drama demands. The Ibsen play is always an organic whole.

It must not be forgotten that Henrik Ibsen, who was born in 1828—surely under the sign of Saturn!—had passed through the flaming revolutionary epoch of 1848, when the lyric pessimism of his youthful poems was transformed into bitter denunciations of authority. He was regarded as a dangerous man, and while he may not have indulged in any marked act of rebellion, his tendencies were anarchic—a relic of his devotion to the French Revolution. But then he was a transcendentalist and an intellectual anarchist. If he called the State the enemy of the individual it was because he foresaw the day when the State might absorb the man. He advocated a bloodless revolution; it must be spiritual to compass victory. Unless men *willed* themselves free there could be no real freedom. "In those days there was no King in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Ibsen confessed that the *becoming* was better than the *being*—a touch of Renan and his beloved *fieri*. He would have agreed with Emerson, who indignantly exclaimed: "Is it not the chief disgrace in the world not to be a unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred of thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong, and our opinion predicted geographically as the North or the South?" Lord Acton's definition that "Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is in itself the highest political end," would have pleased Ibsen. "The minority is always in the right," he asserts.

The Ibsen plays are a long litany praising the man who wills. The weak-

man must be educated. Be strong, not as the "blond roaming beast" of Nietzsche, but as captain of your own soul's citadel! Rémy de Gourmont sees the idea of liberty as an emphatic deformation of the idea of privilege. Good is an accident produced by man at the price of terrible labor. Nature has no mercy. Is there really free will? Is it not one of the most seductive forms of the universal fiction? True, answers in effect Ibsen; heredity controls our temperaments, the dead rule our actions, yet let us act as if we are truly free. Adjuring Brand "To thyself be true," while Peer Gynt practices "To thyself be sufficient," Ibsen proves in the case of the latter that Will, if it frees, also kills. Life is no longer an affair of the tent and tribe. The crook of a man's finger may upset a host, so interrelated is the millet-seed with the star. A poet of affirmations, he preaches in his thunder-harsh voice as did Comte: "Submission is the base of perfection"; but this submission must be voluntary. The universal solvent is Will. Work is not the only panacea. Philosophically Ibsen stands here between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche; he has belief in the Will, though not the Frankfort philosopher's pessimism; and the Will to Power of Nietzsche without that rhapsodist's lyric ecstasy. He demonstrates that a great drama must always have a great philosophic substratum. There may be no design in nature—let us believe there is. Gesture is the arrest of the flux, rendering visible the phenomena of life, for it moderates its velocity. In this hypothesis he would not be at variance with de Gourmont, who has not hesitated to ask whether intelligence itself is not an accident in the creative processes, and if it really be the goal toward which mankind finally believes itself drifting.

There is the mystic as well as the realistic in the Ibsen drama. His Third Kingdom, not of the flesh (Pagan) nor of the spirit (Christian), yet partaking of both, has a ring of Hegel and also of that Abbot of Flores called Joachim, who was a medieval Fran-

ciscan. The grandiloquent silhouettes of the Romantic drama, the mouthers of rhetoric, the substitution of a bric-à-brac mirage for reality, have no place in Ibsen's art. For this avoidance of the banal he has been called a perverter of the heroic. His characters are in reality the bankruptcy of stale heroisms; he replaces the old formula with a new, vital one—Truth at all hazards. He discerns a Fourth Dimension of the spirit. He has said that if mankind had time to think there would be a new world. This opposer of current political and moral values declares that reality is itself a creation of art—each individual creates his picture of the world. An idealist he is in the best sense of the word, though some critics, after reading into the plays Socialism—fancy Ibsen and "regimentation," as Huxley dubbed it!—picture the sturdy individualist as a mere unmasker of conventionalism. How far all this is from Ibsen's intention—who is much more than a satirist and social reformer—may be seen in his Brand, with its austere watchword, "All or Nothing." A prophet and a seer he is, not a glib Socialist exposing municipal evils and offering ready-made prophylactics. The curve of Ibsen's art comprises all these petty minor evils of life, steps across the sill of the human soul; while, ardent pilgrim that he is, he slowly mounts to the peaks from which he may see his Third Kingdom. But, like a second Moses, he has never descended into that country of ineffable visions nor trod its broad and purifying landscapes.

Max Stirner's radical and defiant egoism, expressed in his pithy axiom, "My truth is the truth," might be answered by Ibsen with the contradictory "*Le moi est haïssable*" of Pascal. Indeed, an ironic self-contradiction may be gleaned from a study of Ibsen; each play seems to deny the conclusions of the previous one. But when the entire field is surveyed in retrospect the smaller irregularities and deflections from the level melt into a harmonious picture. Ibsen is complex. Ibsen is confusing. In Ibsen there rages the

thinker, the artist, the critic. These sometimes fail to amalgamate, and so the artistic precipitation is cloudy. He is a true Viking who always loves stormy weather; and, as Brandes said, "God is in his heart, but the devil is in his body." His is an emotional logic, if one may frame such an expression; and it would be in vain to search in his works for the *ataraxia* of the tranquil Greek philosopher. A dynamic grumbler, like Carlyle, he eventually contrives to orient himself; his dramas are only an escape from the ugly labyrinth of existence. If his characters are sick, so is latter-day life. The thinker often overrides the poet in him; and at times the dramatist, the pure *Theatermensch*, gets the bit between his teeth and nearly wrecks the psychologist. He acknowledges the existence of evil in the world, knows the house of evil, but has not tarried in it. "Good must prevail in the end" is the burden of his message, else he would not urge upon his fellow-beings the necessity of willing and doing.

The cold glamour of his moods is supplemented by the strong, sincere purpose underlying them. He feels, with Kierkegaard, that the average sensual man will ever "parry the ethical claim"; and if, in Flaubert's eyes, "man is bad because he is stupid," in Ibsen's "he is stupid because he is bad." "To will is to have to will," says his Maximus in "Emperor and Galilean." This phrase is the capstone of the Ibsen structure. If he abhors the inflated phraseology of altruism he is one with Herbert Spencer, who spoke of a relapse into egotism as the only thing which could make altruism enduring.

Felicity, then, with Ibsen is experience itself, not the result of experience. Life is a huge misunderstanding, and the Ibsen dramas hinge on misunderstandings—the conflict between the instinctive and the acquired, between the forces of heredity and of environment. Herein lies his preference for the drama of disordered wills. And touching on this accusation of

morbidity and sickness, may there not be gleaned from Shakespeare and Goethe many mad, half-mad and brain-sick men and women? The English poet's plays are a perfect storehouse of examples for the alienist. Hallucination that hardens into mania is delicately recorded by Ibsen; he notes with a surgeon's skilled eye the first slight decadence and the final entombment of the will. Furthermore, the chiefest malady of our age is that of the will enfeebled by lack of exercise, by inanition due to unsound education; and as he fingers our spiritual muscles he cries aloud their flabbiness. In men the pathologic symptoms are more marked than in women; hence the number of women in his dramas who assume dominant roles—not that Ibsen has any particular sympathy with the New Woman, but because he has seen that the modern woman marks time better with the *Zeit-Geist* than her male complement.

Will, even if your will be disastrous in its outcome, but will, he insists; and yet demonstrates that only through self-surrender can come complete self-realization. To say "I am what I am" is the Ibsen *credo*; but this "*I*" must be tested in the fire of self-abnegation. To the average theologian all this rings suspiciously like the old-fashioned doctrine of salvation by good works. The Scotch leaven is strong in Ibsen. In his bones he is a moralist, in practice an artist. His power is that of the artist doubled by the profound moralist, the philosopher doubled by the dramatist; the crystallization in the plays of these antagonistic qualities constitutes the triumph of his genius.

III

THE stage is Ibsen's pulpit, but he is first the artist. His moral, as in all great drama, is implicit. He is a doubter; he often answers a question with another question; and if he builds high he also digs deep. His plays may be broadly divided into three phases. First we get the national-romantic;

second, the historical; third, the social dramas of revolt. In the first, under the influence of fable and folk-song, Ibsen delved into the roots of Scandinavia's past; then follow the stirring dramas, "Fru Inger of Ostraet," "The Vikings at Helgeland," "The Pretenders" and those two widely contrasted epics, "Brand" and "Peer Gynt." Beginning with "The Young Men's League" and ending with the dramatic epilogue, "When We Dead Awake," the third period is covered. And what range, versatility, observation, poetic imagination, intellectual power! Yet this dramatist has been called provincial! Provincial—when his maiden tragedy, "Catilina," begins B.C. and his epilogue ends the nineteenth century; when his characters are types as well as individuals that exist from South to North. True man of the North, he sought in Italy for his scene of action, his first hero. That his men and women are strongly Norwegian is no imputation of provincialism—Christiana is a world capital; Scandinavia is not a Boeotia. And is not human nature composed of the same soul-stuff the world over? A similar accusation might be easily brought against French, English and German drama. Not for the sake of the phrase did M. Faguet salute Ibsen as "the greatest psychological dramatist since the time of Racine." And remember that Faguet is a Frenchman loyal to the art traditions of his race—logic, order, clarity of motive and avoidance of cloudy dramatic symbolism.

There are at least three factors to be noted in the Ibsen plays—the play *quâ* play, that is, the drama for the sake of its surface intrigue, with its painting of manner and character; the more ulterior meanings and symbolism; and lastly, the ideologic factor, really the determining one. M. Jules Gaultier, a young French thinker, has evolved from the novels of Gustave Flaubert—greatest master of philosophic fiction—a metaphysic which is very engaging. *Bovaryisme*, he denominates the tendency in humanity

to appear other than it is. This trait has been dealt with by all world novelists and satirists. *Bovaryisme* has elevated it to the dignity of a Universal Fiction. We pretend to be that which we are not. It is the law of being, the one mode by which life is enabled to vary and escape the typic monotony of the species. It is the self-dupery of the race. We are all snobs of the Infinite, parvenus of the Eternal. We are doomed to dissemble, else perish as a race. Now, apply the laws of biology to the moral world and you have the perfect flowering of the application in the Ibsen drama. The basic clash of character is that between species and individual. Each drama furnishes an illustration. In "Rosmersholm" we see Johann Rosmer—the last of the Rosmers, himself personifying the law of heredity—endeavoring to escape this iron law and perishing in the attempt. He drags down with him Rebekka West, who because of her tendency to variability, in an evolutionary sense, might have developed; but the Rosmer ideals poisoned her fresher nature. Halvard Solness, the Master Builder, suffers from his tyrannical conscience—nearly all of Ibsen's characters have a morbid conscience—and not even the spiritual lift of that exotic creature, Hilda Wangel, can save him from his fate. He attempts to go beyond the law and limits of his being, and his will fails. But is it not better to fall from his giddy height than remain a builder of happy homes and churches? From her birth neurotic Hedda Gabler is hopelessly flawed in her moral nature. She succumbs to the first pressure of adverse circumstance. She, too, is not ripe for spiritual rebirth. Nora Helmer, like Hilda Wangel, like Mrs. Alving, frees herself by her variation from what we, in our ignorance of our own possibilities, call the normal. It is a cardinal doctrine of Ibsen that alone we can free ourselves; help can never come from without. This he demonstrates by his ironical flaying of the busybody reformer and idealist, Greger Werle, in "The Wild Duck." Ibsen also presents here

the reverse of the Ibsen medal. Ekdal, the photographer, who is utterly worthless, a fantastic liar and masquerader, like Peer Gynt, is not saved by the interference of Werle—quite the contrary; tragedy is summoned through this same Werle's intrusion, and that most pathetic figure, Hedwig Ekdal, might have striven to self-realization had not her young existence been snuffed out by a virtuous lie. Hilda Wangel is the incarnation of the new order, "Rosmersholm" of the old. And, *les femmes, ces êtres médiocres et magiques*, as Jules Laforgue calls them, the women of Ibsen usually manage to evade the consequences of the life-lie better than the men. The secret is that, nearer nature, they instinctively will to live with more intensity of purpose. Sir Oliver Lodge thinks that the conflict between Free Will and Determinism is because we "ignore the fact that there must be a subjective partition in the universe separating the region of which we have none." It must be that reservoir of eternal certitudes for which Maurice Maeterlinck sighs. The unknown, the subliminal forces *là-bas*, have their share in the control of our will, though we may only judge of what we see on this side of the "misty mid-region" of metaphysic. Be this as it may, Ibsen is content to set his puppets acting within the appreciable limits of free will allowed us by our cognition.

If this evolutionary foundation of the Ibsen drama be too deep, there is also the dialogue, externally simplicity itself, terse, natural, forcible, and in the vernacular replete with sonority, color and rhythm. Yet it is a stumbling-block; beneath the dramatist's sentences are pools of uncertainty. This is the so-called "interior" or "secondary" dialogue. The places, read in the illuminating sense of their symbolism, become other and more perplexing engines of power. They are spiritual palimpsests, through which may be dimly deciphered the hieroglyphics of another soul-continent. We peer into them like crystal-gazers and see the faint outlines of ourselves, but so seemingly distorted as to evoke a shudder. Or

is our ill-suppressed horror in the presence of these haunting shapes of humanity the result of ignorance? The unknown is always disquieting. Henri Taine may be right. "Our inborn human imperfection is part of the order of things, like the constant deformation of the petal in a plant." And perhaps Ibsen, who is ever the dramatist, the lover of dramatic effects and of the accentuation of misery, should be granted the license of the character painter. To heighten the facts of life is a prime office of the playwright.

But he has widened by his synthesis the domain of the theatre; he has brought to it new material for assimilation; he, in a technical sense, has accomplished miracles by transposing hopelessly undramatic ideas to the boards, and by his indomitable tenacity has transmuted them into viable dramatic events and characters. Every piece of Ibsen can be played; even "Peer Gynt" and its forty scenic changes. It has been played—with its epic fantasy, humor, irony, tenderness and philosophy; Peer Gynt, the very picture of the modern inconstant man, his spiritual fount arid, his imagination riotous, his conscience *nil*, rank his ideals, his dodging along the line of least moral resistance, his compromising with every reality of life—this Peer Gynt is the very symbol of our shallow, callous and material civilization.

In all the conflicting undertow of his temperament and intellect Ibsen has maintained his equilibrium. He is his own Brand, a heaven-stormer; his own Skule, the kingly self-mistruster, and his own Solness, the doubter of himself cowed by the thoughts of the new generation — personified in August Strindberg and Gerhart Hauptmann. The old and the new meet at a tumultuous apex of art at once grim, repellent, morose, emotional, unsocial, masterful and gripping. And what an art! What an ant-hill of struggling, impotent humanity he has exposed! What riches for the comedians—those ever admirable exponents of *Bovaryisme*. They pass us slowly by, this array of Ibsen men and women, with anguish

in their eyes, their features convulsed and tortured into revealing their most secret shames by their cruel master. They pass us slowly, this motley mob, with hypnotic beckoning gestures and piteous pleading glances, for their souls will be presently spilled by their implacable creator. Lady Inger, her son dead, her daughter distraught; revengeful Hjordis and bewitched Sigurd; Duke Skule, fearing Hakon's divine right to the throne; Svanhilda freeing Falk as she goes to her martyr marriage with the unloved Gulsted; Brand, a new Adam, sacrificing wife and child to his fetish, "All or Nothing"; fascinating, inconstant Peer Gynt; Emperor Julian, that magnificent failure; the grotesque Steensgard; the whitened sepulchre, Consul Bernick; Nora and her self-satisfied Helmer; Oswald Alving and his agonized mother; the doughty Stockmann, who declares that the exceptional man stands ever alone; Gina, the homely

sensible, and Ekdal, the self-illusionist; Rebekka West and Johann Rosmer; Ellida Wangel and the Stranger; Hedda and Loevborg; Hilda and Solness; Asta and Rita Allmers; John Gabriel Borkman, his gloomy brows furrowed by thoughts of vengeance, accused by Ella Rentheim, whose soul he has let slip from his keeping; Rubek and Irene, the tragedy of the artist who sacrifices love for art; and the entire cohort of subsidiary characters, each one personal and alive—is not this small world, this pictured life, a most eloquent witness to the fecundity of the Northern Rembrandt! He proclaims that "The Kingdom of God is within you"; Tolstoy has preached the like. But between the depressing quietism of the Russian and the crescent individualism of the Norwegian there lies the gulf separating East and West. Tolstoy faces the past. Ibsen confronts the future.



A NOVEL TYPE

HER tact is keen, her poise is charming—
He's quite at ease who talks with her;
No awkward pause, no lapse alarming
Is e'er permitted to occur.
She soothes and smooths the roughest places,
And steers and cheers life's stumbling paces.

She has a smile for one—for twenty—
And though well read, as women go,
You'll find that you can teach her plenty,
There is so much she *doesn't* know.
She greets your jests with reverent laughter—
Oh, she's the girl the wits are after!

Her soul is full of deep religion
Which shows in acts, as well as words,
And then, she's pretty as a pigeon—
Which is the prettiest of birds.
You'd like to know her? Then I wish you'd
Read my new novel, when 'tis issued!

MADELINE BRIDGES.

STUFF O' DREAMS

By Vincent Harper

FINALLY the far-flung Faralones—lingering, tenacious fragments of the past—slipped, as the steady ramparts of the Sierras had, over the rim of dreams, and only Tamalpais looming like a ghost was there to show the woman, looking backward, where God's country was. Then even Tamalpais turned into cloud and was not, so that the past was swallowed up forever. Ahead was sea—sea and the nameless thing life was to be.

"Well?" said the woman to the man beside her.

"Well?" he replied.

"Look!" she went on; "even Mount Tamalpais has forgotten us."

"I told you that the world would vanish—if you dared!"

"But it was good of Tamalpais, wasn't it, to see the last of us? I hope they shut the Golden Gate—against stray memories that might return home, hungry—don't you?"

"But memory—all memories—are done with now, you know. Come, let's go forward—life lies ahead."

So they walked forward then to watch the sailors stowing the hawsers and bow gear and making all things snug for the long voyage.

"As she is—steady," shouted the skipper, standing on the bridge, to which the quartermaster, standing at the wheel, replied, "As she is, sir." And so, southwest by west by two points west, was the course laid, not to be veered from until a purple cone emerging from the sea should grow into Tahiti twelve days hence.

"Well, we're off for good now," said the little old gentleman who seemed to

be their only fellow-passenger, invading the troubled silence in which the man and woman sat trying to realize.

"Yes; won't you sit down, sir?" answered the woman by way of reparation for the man's somewhat ungracious welcome of the old gentleman.

He sat accordingly, placing his stool before them where he might watch their faces.

"Never been in the Tropics, eh? Then you have never lived," went on the old man, showing that he had not outlived all sentiment.

"That's true," murmured the woman, regretting her answering sentiment, however, on feeling the man's foot tapping her own in warning.

"Not going on business, I hope?" pursued the little old gentleman, determined to draw the man into the talk.

"No," grunted the man.

"That's right, too. Pleasure, of course," chirped on the little old gentleman, this time expanding his remark to cover the pair.

"Hardly that," protested the man, sitting up and mentally clearing for action.

"Dear me! Surely neither of you can be going for your health?" and the little old gentleman looked flatteringly from one to the other sunburned face.

"Really, you know, since you seem so interested in us," said the man, ignoring the restraining tap of the woman's foot on his own, "I might say that we came on the spur of the moment—wanted to get away—reached 'Frisco this morning—heard of this steamer—got ready to embark

in an hour—and here we are. Tahiti, I believe, is where the boat is going—never heard about it—island, I suppose."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the old gentleman.

"You know the Tropics—won't you tell us about them, sir? We may decide to live there—somewhere—anywhere," the woman hurried to say lubricatingly.

"Don't, then," said the little old gentleman dogmatically.

"Why?" asked the man, becoming interested in the old fellow.

"I see, madam, that you have 'The Ebb Tide' there on your lap. Ever read it?" asked the old gentleman, his little eyes snapping under contracting brows of shaggy gray.

"No. Is it interesting? We both love Stevenson."

"So do I, so do I. Only white man that ever understood the South Seas, Stevenson. Calls them a sapphire sink somewhere; capital, that—for, as he says in 'The Ebb Tide,' only vagabond souls drift thither—to forget, be forgotten, and drown their past. Chaps who dare not live down their mistakes at home; deserters and quitters and cowards and sneaks—that's the flotsam and jetsam you'll find thereabouts. Fools, sir, and knaves who imagine they win by running away from the battle of life."

The woman was holding the man's hand tight as the little old gentleman rattled on; and the man was angry and sick at heart.

"I spend every winter among the isles—an old fellow has a right to his dreams; but you, sir—"

The man stood up. The sweep and swirl and the screech of the albatross drew his attention.

"But surely the islands are lovely and strange?" asked the woman, telegraphing the man to sit down and hear.

"Miracles, madam—but that is the danger. Only poets and men who are otherwise mad should venture to live so near to the naked form of beauty. Some men can't stand it. It works in the blood; it destroys all reality; it

makes life a drifting which ends in the sink."

"It must be nice to pick bananas and cocoanuts off one's own trees," remarked the man in revenge for having to sit down.

"I see, sir, that you have a practical mind. The Tropics would be safe for a man who valued their witchery of nameless beauty only because of its association with cheap and handy food," retorted the little old gentleman gently.

"Oh, my husband is merely teasing me now, sir. He is a poet—honestly."

"A poet who appreciates cheap and handy food, however," added the man, laughing and rejoicing in the turn the talk was taking.

Again the woman spoke. "But, now, sir, do please go on about the Tropics. You have visited other islands than Tahiti, I dare say?"

"Assuredly, my dear madam. I merely go to Tahiti in order to go away from it—beastly hole full of low Chinese and still lower French—though naturally the island is a paradise. You must go by trading schooner, or, better yet, by canoe, to the remote islands of the less known groups, if you wish to see unspoiled Maoris—yes, alas! and thoroughly spoiled white men. Talk about romance!"

"Tell us, do!"

"Well, if I do not bore you, let me tell you about the old madman I unearthed on a little group of atolls which even Cameron of Sunday Island supposed were quite uninhabited—a tiny string of coral reefs lying, strangely enough, right along the one hundred and eightieth degree of longitude, and consequently at the precise spot where east is west, and yesterday is tomorrow, and tomorrow yesterday, just as one likes."

"But how very charming—for all the world like one of—" the woman was beginning, when the man, grown sure that sentiment had been safely passed, offered the little old gentleman a cigar, lit one himself and told the woman not to interrupt so charming a tale.

"Yes," continued the little old gentleman, hitching his stool closer to the two with cheery eagerness, "I visited the old philosopher several times—a rare thinker, and, of course, mad as a hatter. He was a German mystic, a genius, a philosopher—in short, a lunatic; but, for all that, rather wiser than most men. His name was Werter—assumed, of course, for everybody sails under false colors in the South Seas, remember. That shows you what sort of birds fly there. Max Nordau says, I know, that men assume false names when they are about to show their true character, or when they wish to escape the consequences of having been true to their real selves; but my name is Nathaniel Meiggs—what's yours?"

The woman colored, but the man, with creditable promptitude and ease under the circumstances, replied, "Appleton." And the little old gentleman rose and lifted his hat to Mr. and Mrs. Appleton before continuing the tale, while the woman fixed "Appleton" in her mind for future reference.

"Well, then, I found old Werter, as I say, living alone upon his archipelago of dreams which he had called the Neti Neti Islands, which means in Hindustani, he told me, the 'Not Not' Islands. He claimed to have come down to live in Not Not Land in order to escape the two great curses which, he declared, lie crushing out the heart of life—the memory of yesterday and the dread of tomorrow."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the man; "how—how—I mean, what an ass!"

But the woman looked away over the stern toward where had been God's country, and stooped to pick up something which she had not dropped.

"An ass, you say? Truly. A veritable son of Issachar, for we are told that 'Issachar is a strong ass crouching down between two burdens; and he saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant.' Of course, the probability is that Werter, like all the brotherhood of South Sea beach-combers, had left his country for his country's good; but, by the powers,

the old crackbrained *mahatma* of Neti Neti had worked out a delicious theory of life before I found him running about stark naked among the *burao* bushes on Esperanza, as he called one island of his Not Not kingdom. You see," went on the little old gentleman, wiping his spectacles after his quiet laugh, "when all is said and done, the old chap told the truth. It is the memory of yesterday and the shadow of the future which make today the failure that it is—don't you think so, madam?"

"Go on about the queer old German, please," replied the woman, slipping a groping hand under the steamer rug, which the man took and held.

"Yes, do go on," urged the man, musing. "What did the poor old beggar do to lay the twin ghosts of the past and future?"

"Annihilated them, sir!" snapped out the little old gentleman, with twinkling eyes; "annihilated them—only thing one can do with them. As I remarked before, his islands lie along the one hundred and eightieth degree of longitude—so he had Father Time by the throat, as it were. You know, I suppose, that ships crossing that longitude in one direction lose a day, and gain a day when sailing in the opposite direction. Well, then, old Werter hit out the idea that by shifting about from one of his islands to the other he could turn today into tomorrow, or tomorrow into today, or either into yesterday—with a consequent avoidance of any unpleasant duty or obligation connected with any particular day. For example: certain anniversaries, he said, caused him the keenest anguish. Very well; he would remain on Nirvana Island until the eve of the dreaded day, and then by rowing over to Esperanza Island he would cut the unwelcome day clean out of the calendar. The poor old dreamer felt certain that he had in this way not grown a year older since coming to Neti Neti, for, you see, on the thirtieth of September he would row over to the other island, and it would be the second of October there, and the first, which

was his birthday, never got a chance to put a wrinkle on his brow or a tear in his heart."

"How perfectly charming!"

"Charming, madam! It was sublime!" replied the little old gentleman, rubbing his palms with delight, and then laying an argumentative hand on the man's knee, to that uneasy one's no little uneasiness.

"Talk about the 'land where it is always afternoon,' or the 'land where all things are forgotten,' of which the Psalmist speaks, the land of Neti Neti beats them all; for, you see, with its delightful sliding chronology one can defy time. After all, what are these bugaboos of past and future that they should terrify the present? The *yogis* or wise men of India defy the past and future, death, danger, disease, whatever threatens peace, by merely crying 'Neti Neti' into the face of fate. Not so bad, that—to pulverize all evil by the brave proclamation that *It is NOT!*"

The man got up and walked about a bit. The woman sat and looked far off astern, where was God's country.

"There are three islands in old Werten's group, one lying plumb on the meridian, where time is at one's mercy, and one on either side. He named the central one Nil, for, when you think of it, the present is nothing; and the other two, Nirvana, or oblivion, and Esperanza, or hope. So there was method in his madness, you observe. With the present obliterated, the past rubbed out and the future anticipated and annihilated, one should be able to live a rather contented life in a blissful state of nature," chuckled the little old gentleman.

"If one is mad," commented the man.

"Or brave," murmured the woman wistfully.

"Or has sense enough to cut loose from the mistakes of yesterday and to await the morrow like a man," philosophized the little old gentleman. "For look at it. Neither the past nor the future has any real existence, has it? Certainly not. Today is all. But

we spend today in morbid retrospect or cringing foreboding. As I look back at my long life I can see that all my wretchedness came of dreading what never came or regretting what had ceased to be. I'm done with all that now, however. I refuse to be a slave of Greenwich, and on whatever meridian of longitude I find myself I proclaim it to be the one hundred and eightieth east and west of my centre of life—no mortgage of yesterday encumbers today—no, nor dares the morrow unnerve me today. You two young folks on the threshold of life should settle in Neti Neti!"

"In a fool's paradise, living on dreams," muttered the man.

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of"—until we wake to know the nothingness of everything that seems to deny us life. What's sin? A clutching after imaginary good. What's fear? The coward's act of faith in his own failure. Who run away? Who try to wrench delirium from the hands of fate by breaking from the laws of reason and the voice of honor? Why, they who dare not cry their Neti Neti in the teeth of fate—who fancy that the errors of the past have power to make the future fatal. I tell you, my dear friends—"

But the woman now had risen, and the man looked at his watch and said it was time to eat. So the little old gentleman trotted off, promising to tell them many more strange things about the Tropics.

"Oh, Jack," began the woman, clinging to the man, "God knows—"

"Hush, darling—here comes the purser! By the way, Mr. Purser, how about my stateroom?"

"Why, does not your wife like the one the stewardess showed her?"

"Cæsar's ghost, man, this lady is my—sister!" laughed the man oddly; "so you must find a room for me, you know."

"Oh, I beg pardon. I understood you to say that your—"

"Nonsense! Any old room will do for me. Kathy, your room suits you, does it not?"

"Perfectly," replied the woman, speaking from the rail over which she was leaning and looking, looking far astern, where was God's country.

"You can have your pick of the ship, as you are the only passengers," laughed the purser.

"Glad of it. But, by the bye, who is the charming little old gentleman who has been entertaining us with South Sea tales? A rare old codger."

"Oh, that's old Mr. Meiggs; between ourselves, a bit—" and the purser touched his forehead and went off to his manifests.

"I understand—my king!" whispered the woman, when the man took hold of her two hands and looked into her eyes.

The luncheon gong sounded all hands below.

"Well," said the red-faced skipper when he sat at the head of the table; "you have noticed, of course, that we have come about?"

"Come about? Why, no! Nothing wrong, I hope," replied the man, while

the heart of the woman rose into her throat with a wild belief that her prayers were answered.

"Nothing dangerous, but the engines—brand-new ones—are out of tune, and we must put back to 'Frisco —only a day's delay, so I hope you'll forgive me," answered the skipper, sipping his soup.

No one asked why the woman ran away from the table and up on deck—women do that as a matter of course at sea.

"Look! Look! God's country, Jack, my king!"

"Today is Nil—and if I go back and live on Esperanza for awhile—"

"I'll be waiting on Nirvana for you, Jack, when you come, a hero and a victor, not a—a—"

"A slave of Greenwich."

When the *Mariposa* sailed two days afterward the only passenger was a little old gentleman who spent his winters dreaming and drifting about the Tropics.



RISKY BUSINESS

"SO Bob Hiflyer is married, is he? I must hasten around and congratulate him."

"You'd better not; he's been married a year now, and might think you were guying him."



HIS BULGING BROW

FARMER CLODPELTER (*ruminatingly*)—No use talkin', the whole store of knowledge now available is too big for any one person to master. I s'pose likely its increase in the last century was greater than durin' all the centuries before it. Education no longer means a knowledge of everything, as it once did, and—

FARMER HORNBEAK—I sorter guess you ain't met my nephew, that graduated from the academy week before last, since he came out, hev ye?

THE PUZZLE OF BETTY

WHEN Betty has her manners on
 She's gentle and demure,
 And if one saw her only then
 It's reasonably sure,
 So soft and infantile and shy
 She seems to her adorer,
 She cannot mind herself at all,
 And he must do it for her.

But Betty has a witty nose
 'Twixt petal cheek and cheek,
 And Betty has a pretty pose
 When she essays to speak.
 Her lips pout sweetly round her words
 As if she meant them kisses,
 To tantalize the listener
 With showing what he misses!

She's but a helpless child to those
 She turns her bluet eye to;
 A smile, and then her witty nose
 Her eye quite gives the lie to!
 Distracted, to her mouth one turns
 Some judgment to afford her.
 In vain! for there again he sees
 Adorable disorder.

Thus Betty's glance affirms one way,
 Her witty nose the other,
 And everything that one may say
 Contrariwise says t'other!
 Her mouth whereon the duty rests
 To hold the balance sweetly,
 Evades responsibility,
 And puckers indiscreetly.

And so from this to that surmise
 Each one still guessing goes—
 Is Betty really in her eyes?
 Or is she in her nose?—
 I'm sure her mouth could settle it
 Past anybody's missing,
 If it would mind its "p's" and "q's"
 And speak, instead of kissing!

ALGERNON TASSIN.

TASTERS AT FAME

By Ethel Sigsbee Small

IT will be with a thrill of glad surprise that the reader begins this story and discovers it is by me. To tell the truth, I did not think I should write any more stories. It is really very hard work. You may think beating stones is difficult if you are a day-laborer, but writing stories is harder than any profession. Your hand aches for days after. Yes, literature is strenuous. Think of writing six thousand words and spelling every one right!

So, as I am not fond of work, I thought I would just live on the fame my last story brought me. I've been having an awfully good time lately, anyway, and though I admire art and think it's perfectly lovely, still one can get lots of pleasure out of donkey parties, and paper dolls, and Clap-In-and-Clap-Out. Then there is the brain work to be considered. You know how hard it is to write a letter, and how you screw up your eyes and bite your pen and kick the table-legs? Well, imagine writing five hundred dozen letters!

I am writing a book. I work on it at odd times when I have nothing to do. Sometimes, when I write Chapter 52 at the top of a clean sheet, or Chapter 53, I sigh and almost wish I had been born a simple child, like Clara May, who lives only to laugh and wear accordion-plaited dresses.

I thought I wouldn't write any more stories, but one night I realized my selfishness.

"It's all very well for you to let everything drop," I said, "and let the laurels wither on your brow"—only I didn't say it so poetically—"but don't

you see the selfishness of your course? It is all very well for you to stop giving your thoughts to the world. It doesn't hurt you—but what about the world?" Then the little lights in my conscience flared out strong, and I saw myself in all my baseness.

I turned over and humped the pillow and shut my eyes tight, but I couldn't sleep. I kept thinking of the world and how I had starved it. I kept thinking of the long, weary months of waiting, looking, longing for a message from me. It was not until I had taken a solemn oath—and crossed my heart—to begin a story tomorrow that I lost myself in sleep.

Well, the next day was Saturday, and Cissie came around right after breakfast with her paper dolls. It was a terrible moment, but I sent Cissie and the paper dolls away. Then I teased some cookies from the cook and took all the apples out of the fruit-dish on the sideboard, and got some ice water, and went upstairs, and took the pins out of my hair—I wear a few pins now, though the ribbon really keeps my braid looped up; but hairpins make you feel so much older—and got my paper and a pencil, and put my feet up, and then took them down, and shut the window so I couldn't hear the children having fun in the street, and took a bite of cookie and then a bite of apple, and began. I almost thought I heard the world give a joyful sigh.

In the beginning I thought some time over who I should have for heroine, and finally I decided on Glenda. The reason I took her again is because she is beautiful, and a heroine *has* to be beautiful.

So Glenda is my heroine—dear, beautiful, fascinating Glenda! She's so pretty—Glenda! Did you ever see a little white rose with a pinky flush on its face? That's Glenda. Did you ever see a deep blue sky at night, when the stars are peeping out and the sun has not been gone long? That's Glenda. Did you ever see the warm brown of the horse-chestnut and the pale yellow of corn silk mingled until they form a beautiful gold-brown color? (You never did, I know, but I ask you just as if you had. Authors can do that.) That's Glenda. Perhaps I'd better explain, for the benefit of common people who will read this story—I hate to think common people *will* read it, but I suppose they will if they want to—that the first part of the description of Glenda refers to her complexion, the second to her eyes and the third to her hair. Poets and authors will recognize this all by themselves, and probably write me to ask to borrow the ideas for a poem or novel.

When I told Glenda I had chosen her for heroine she flushed all up for pleasure and said: "Write about the time I went to the Arnolds' dance, Suzanne." (Glenda calls me Suzanne when she remembers. She is the only one who tries to please me.) At the time I thought I would write about Glenda at the Arnolds' dance, but now I've decided I won't, because it is simply that Glenda went, and it was a grown-up dance, and her mother let her, after she had teased her nearly ill, and though there were loads of real grown-up women there, and beautiful ones, too, Glenda was the most popular person present. I don't think that's much of a story, do you? So I will write of something else.

One day I was practicing in the parlor and nearly going to sleep, with the metronome tack-tacking above my head and "Lit-tle-boy-he-killed-his-brother" thumping over and over on the keys, when the door opened and Glenda came in. My mother doesn't allow the girls to come in when I am practicing, so I was very much surprised; but I kept on thumping.

"Where's your mother?" asked Glenda guiltily.

"Upstairs," I said; "you'd better go out and read until I finish."

"I can't wait," said Glenda, and then I saw that she looked strange.

"Sit close to the piano and talk," I said; "I can hear you."

Glenda put a tabouret close beside me and sat down on it. I kept right on at that disgusting scale.

"Susan," said Glenda in a choking voice, "I can't stand it!"

"You'll have to," I said calmly. "Mama will call down to know why I'm not practicing if I stop."

"Oh, I don't mean *that*," said Glenda impatiently.

"What do you mean, then?" I said.

"This life—it chokes me!" cried Glenda. She sprang up and knocked the tabouret over.

"Please stop that, Glenda," I said. "Mama doesn't allow us to romp in the parlor."

"Romp!" cried Glenda—she sort of snorted in the bitterest way. "Romp? My God!"

Wasn't that *awful*? I don't see how Glenda Wilderson ever said such a dreadful thing. I just gave her one look.

"Oh, Susan, Susan!" Glenda cried; "I'm so miserable!"

"Well, if you don't have to swear if you are," I said coldly, but I felt very sorry for her, and I'd have given worlds to stop making that racket with my right hand and turn and comfort her.

"No one sympathizes with me—no one; not even you!" Glenda said, and I knew she was crying.

"I do, too, Glenda Wilderson," I said. "You ought to be ashamed to say I don't. What's the matter?"

"It's the same old fever—the same old longing," said Glenda restlessly. "The stage calls me."

"Yes, I know," I said; "it always does. But what makes you so miserable about it?"

"I am always miserable about it," said Glenda indignantly. "If I do not seem to be it is because—because I can smile and smile and yet be a villain."

"I didn't say you were a villain!" I said, shocked.

"That's a quotation," said Glenda. "I mean that I am always miserable in my heart, but I wear a smiling mask over my troubles. Sometimes it slips away. It has slipped today." That was pretty bright, wasn't it? Oh, I can tell you beforehand that there aren't many girls like Glenda.

"Well, Glenda," I said, "I am always miserable, too. I suppose you think you are the only miserable one. I guess I wanted to go on the stage long before you did." This always makes Glenda furious, though it is true.

"When did you first want to go on the stage, Susan?" she asked in a thin, cold voice.

"When I went to see 'Little Lord Fauntleroy,'" I said calmly. "I was five."

"Oh, yes," said Glenda. "Well, I wanted to go when I heard my mother sing some tunes from 'Pinafore' when she was rocking me to sleep. I was two."

Well, I don't say Glenda told a story. Far be it from me to accuse anyone of such a terrible thing; but it certainly does seem— Well, Glenda is my heroine, and I'll do my duty by her. She said she wanted to go on the stage three years before I did. Very well—it's true, then.

"Go on, and tell me about your troubles, Glenda," I said when I could forgive her.

"The other day," said Glenda, "my father cut an article out of the paper and gave it to me. 'Here's something which should be of inestimable value to you, Glennie,' he said. Then he laughed as if he had said something funny and added, 'Study it carefully.' It was called 'How to Make an Actress.' Well, you can imagine my feelings, Susan. He never has sympathized with me—never given me a word of encouragement, and now here he was telling me to study 'How to Make an Actress.' It was as much as admitting that I was going to be one. Now, wasn't it?"

"It certainly was," I said. "Oh, Glenda, I'm so glad!"

"Listen," said Glenda. "I studied it every minute. It was about Mrs. Leslie Carter and the way Belasco trained her. I didn't have anyone to knock me around, but I managed to knock myself pretty well. I was sore for days—"

"I remember your arms were bruised last week," I said.

"My legs, too," breathed Glenda. "Oh, I worked, Susan, I worked faithfully. I kept telling myself it would not be in vain, that at last my father understood." I batted my eyes to keep back something; Glenda's voice was so low and earnest.

"Well, I learned all there was to learn from that article. When I knew it all I could smile. I had suffered, but I had learned. I was happy. Then I went to papa." Glenda paused a minute. I was trying to play, but the scale was going crooked.

"Well?" I asked.

"I said I had studied the article and knew it all by heart. I said I felt I was as well fitted for my career as Mrs. Carter now, and asked him when I could go on.

"'Go on?' he said; he was writing, and he looked up in his stupid, fat way. 'Go on where—go on what?'

"'The stage,' I said."

"Well?" I inquired. My fingers were shaking on the keys. "What did he say?"

Glenda rose and knocked over the tabouret again.

"Say? *He laughed!*"

"Glenda!"

"He laughed and said, 'Heaven help us, what ails the baby?'"

"Glenda! Your father called you that?"

"He did," said Glenda.

Then I stopped playing. I had to; I didn't care whether mama called down or not. I turned on the stool and saw Glenda's crimson face and brimming eyes. And then I ran over and put my arms about her.

"Never mind," I whispered.

"I don't mind—now," said Glenda

proudly; "but I'm not going to stand it any longer."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Look here," said Glenda. She wiped her eyes and sniffled and dug down in her pocket. She brought out a chocolate mouse, the picture of an actress, a ball and jacks, and last a little crumpled piece of newspaper. "Read that," she said.

I read it. It said:

WANTED—TEN YOUNG LADIES to appear in the ballroom scene of "The Great Emerald Robbery." Call and see Manager Baldwin at Opera House between ten and twelve, Monday morning.

"What's this got to do with it?" I said, puzzled.

Glenda's eyes flashed and she laid a trembling hand on my arm.

"Don't you see?" she said. "I'm going to be one of the ten!"

"*I'm going to be one of the ten!*" I'll never forget it if I live to be a thousand. "*I'm going to be one of the ten!*" She said those very words—just like that, "*I'm going to be one of the ten!*" I felt dizzy.

You see, Glenda and I had always talked such a lot about going on the stage. It had been, "When I go on the stage I will do so-and-so," and, "I shall have such a one for my leading man—when I go on the stage." Everything dated from that time. So you can see for yourself how her words would affect me.

"Well?" said Glenda. Glenda always likes you to tell your surprise, instead of just showing it.

"Do you dare?" I managed to gasp out.

"Of course I dare," said Glenda, tilting up her nose; "I would dare anything for my life's mission."

"Of course—so would I," I said. Glenda had a sort of contemptuous way about her, as if she thought she was the only one who would dare for their life's mission. "But what will your mother say? And oh, Glenda, your father!"

"For the present I shall not make my step known," said Glenda in the haughtiest way. "While the company

plays here there will be no need to make it known. Of course when I go from here—for New York, I imagine—I will leave a note behind me. They will read it and realize that they can no more bind the wings of my ambition than—than—than anything. Next month, when I am a star, they will be proud and glad to tell people I'm their daughter. And if they behave very nicely I may spend my summers with them. The winters, of course, will be spent on the road, or else in New York, if we have a long run."

I wish you could have heard her! It was just as if she was a real actress. I sat up with my eyes wide open, and I guess my mouth, too, and listened. Somehow she didn't seem the same Glenda who ate pickles with me at recess and got kept in regularly for algebra.

"Well, I must go now," she said after awhile. "I'll be over after luncheon and we can talk some more. Monday's the day—next Monday; don't forget. And I think half-past ten a good hour. We don't want to be late—they might get the ten picked out before they see us."

"Oh, yes," I said; but something cold crept up from my feet 'way into my heart.

Glenda stood still and stared at me.

"Of course you're going to be one of the ten, too, Susan, aren't you?" she said in a surprised voice. I drew around one of the roses in the carpet with my toe. It was a big red rose; I can remember just how it looked.

"Susan!" said Glenda so loud I jumped. I know no one has more ambition than I have, and nobody would do more for their life's work, but—

"I don't believe my mother will let me," I said, and kept on drawing roses. I didn't look up, but I could feel the scorn in Glenda's eyes.

"And *that—that* will keep you!" She walked a few steps toward the door. "Very well, give up your birth-right!"

"I'm going," I said; "I never said I wasn't. I don't know what you mean by talking to me like that, Glenda

Wilderson. Can't I say my mother won't let me, if I want to? It's the truth. I'm going—of course I wouldn't give up my birthright, and if you think I would you aren't the girl I always liked."

Then Glenda flung her arms around me. "Oh, Suzanne!" she cried. "I didn't mean it—indeed, I didn't mean it, and you are the most ambitious girl I ever knew—truly you are, Suzanne!"

Well, of course that made me very proud, and I drew my head up and sat up straight, and we talked everything all over again from the beginning.

My mother made me practice on *Saturday* because I didn't finish out my hour, and she gave me a lot of mending to do, as a lesson—to make me remember, she said. However, Glenda said the price was small enough to pay for our talk that morning, and she told me she'd do half the mending; then she changed her mind and said no, her maid could do it when she got on the stage. Glenda's a generous-hearted girl.

Did you ever spend a whole night awake? The night before the day which was to mean the beginning of our professional careers I went to bed at eight; but I never slept a wink.

I thought of my mother and the way her hair waved softly on her temples and how pretty and bright her eyes were. They never seemed so bright before. Then I thought of Harry and Florence and the baby, and after awhile I began to weep a little. I thought it was two o'clock then, but it must have been later, because I shut my eyes for a minute, and when I opened them there was the daylight in the room, and a great, broad beam of sun. And mother put in her head to say, "Lazy Bones!" So you see I did not get a wink of sleep. Glenda said she didn't either.

She came promptly at ten, and when I saw her I stopped trying to make my hair pompadour. It didn't matter then whether it pompadoured or not; in fact, no one would look to see if I had hair, with Glenda beside me. So

I just plaited it in the same old braid and let it go at that. Glenda had on a suit of her sister's.

Now Bernice is twenty, but she isn't very big and her clothes fit Glenda nicely; we always use them when we give plays. (It generally puts Bernice in a very bad humor when she comes to the play and finds us in her clothes; but, as we tell her, one should be willing to make any sacrifice for art.) The suit Glenda had on today was brand-new. It was brown—brown's so fashionable—and there were little pieces of light blue braid up near the neck. It was a walking suit on Bernice, but it made a train for Glenda. Then Glenda had on her Aunt Margaret's brown hat, with Bernice's veil pinned on it, and her mother's brown shopping bag and parasol.

"I think I'm pretty nice myself," Glenda said. "But go on and dress, Suzanne."

I told her it didn't matter about me—I couldn't look like her, and it was no use trying. But she made me get one of my mother's skirts and put it on. It was an old one—black and white checked—and quite ugly, but it was all I could find. I lapped it over several times about the waist, and Glenda pulled my blue jacket down over the place. I'm afraid I didn't look much like a lady; in fact, Kitty, our housemaid, has a great deal more style.

When we reached the street we drew our veils down and our skirts up and took the car. Nobody looked at me much. A good many people stared at Glenda, but everybody always does that.

We had been so excited about getting off that we hadn't had time to get excited about getting there; but now we began to feel awfully queer. The streets slipped by like mice. Pretty soon we turned into Main street, and my heart sort of leaped. So did Glenda's. Then we reached Front street, where you have to transfer. We got out and forgot our long skirts, and stumbled into the other car. Then a short ride—it was a good thing it was

short; we'd have burst if it hadn't been—and *there was the opera house!* I rang and Glenda rang, and we fell over each other's skirts and got off the car.

Now, I don't like to talk about Glenda, but, as I always tell the truth—that is, almost always—I must confess that as we walked up to the theatre Glenda's steps got slower and slower, and when we came to the words "Stage Entrance" they stopped altogether. My heart was racing like a catboat, but I hadn't thought of stopping, and I turned to look at Glenda.

"Come on," I said.

"I've got a pain," said Glenda weakly. "I'll go home, I think."

Well, my scorn certainly rose at those words. Here was Glenda on the threshold of art, the door only waiting for her touch to fly open. Here were laurel wreaths and diamonds and bouquets and sparkly dresses and sparkly lights, and leading men ready to die for her. In short, here was Fame yearning for her, and she hesitated!

Glenda was looking down the street at a car that was coming. Then she turned to me and said piteously, "I'm going home, Susan." And I think she would, too—though she says now she wouldn't—if the stage door hadn't opened suddenly and a man come out.

We were right in his way, and he looked at us sharply. He was a dusty-looking man, with bright black eyes and a beard.

"What'll you have, ladies?" he said.

Then it was that Glenda recovered her lost place in my estimation. Of course I would have answered him myself if Glenda hadn't been so quick to.

"We came in answer to your advertisement," said Glenda.

Wasn't that fine? A real grown-up lady couldn't have put it better. I was so proud and glad.

"Oh—um!" said the man. He stood still and looked at us—his eyes sort of snapped as they ran over me—and he bit his mustache. "Aren't you rather young?" he began; then he

looked at Glenda and said suddenly, "come inside."

We went in. There were some broken boards to step over, and everything was covered with dust. We held up our mother's and sister's skirts and followed the man. All the time we kept thinking that the next turn would bring us to the greenroom.

The greenroom is a beautiful place—I've never seen one, but Cissie Ronald has. Everything is green. The walls are hung with it, in satin; then there are green chairs, and pictures in green frames, and a great divan covered with green pillows. This divan belongs to the star, but she lets the leading man sit on it, of course. The chorus girls flutter around in their pretty, gauzy dresses and wait on them and bring them ice cream. They are only allowed to eat pistache in the greenroom, Cissie says.

We didn't get into the greenroom, though. I don't know why, unless they only let really, truly actresses see it—Cissie didn't tell me about that. Still, Cissie isn't a real true actress—though she will be some day; her own mother says she can when she's twenty-three, so if she lives that long she will.

The man stopped between two big boards that went 'way up to the ceiling. In front was a smooth open floor. Glenda caught my hand, and I caught hers. *It was the stage!* To the right were the seats, rows upon rows of them, and an old woman sweeping.

"Have you pretty evening dresses?" asked the man, looking at Glenda. This was rather embarrassing, because, you see, Glenda's dresses are short and she hasn't any *real* evening dresses, anyway. But Glenda answered him at once.

"Oh, yes!" she said.

"What colors are they?" said the man. I thought Glenda would blush then, but she didn't.

"Blue and pink and yellow and green and lavender and old rose and écrù," said Glenda.

The man's eyes sparkled. "I wish all of them had that many to choose from," he muttered. "What are they

like? Describe the green one." I really felt worried for Glenda, but she described a beautiful costume.

The man nodded approval. "All right," he said emphatically, "you'll do; and we'll decide on the green dress. There's a rehearsal in half an hour. What's your name?"

"Miss Earle," said Glenda simply.

"First name?"

"Editha," said Glenda.

"All right." The man scribbled it down. "Rehearsal for the ballroom girls at eleven-thirty—don't forget. Good morning."

I don't care if the reader does think I'm a baby; I just couldn't help it. I felt so awfully disappointed and sort of little and sick; but I wiped away the tears with my handkerchief.

"Wait," said Glenda; "you forgot to take my friend's name."

"Oh, I don't want—that is, I've got all I need now," said the man.

"Then scratch off my name," said Glenda.

Yes, she said those very words! (Glenda, thou wast ever dear to me, but at that moment did I know no other wert dearer.)

"What's that?" said the man. "I want you, you know."

"Then you'll have to take her, too," said Glenda. "Eleven is only one more than ten, anyway."

The man studied me with frowning eyes. "Have you evening dresses?" he asked, still frowning.

"Yes," said Glenda; "she's got all the colors I have, and a white one besides."

"She's too short," said the man, as if I were a pony and couldn't hear him, "and I said young ladies, not children; still"—his eyes ran over Glenda—"well, what's your name?"

"Miss Gilbert," I said, trembling.

"First name?"

"Mary."

What do you think of that? Here I might have taken any name in the world—Genevieve, Rosalie, Dorothy, Floretta—*any!* And I chose—Mary! I don't know what possessed me. Why, Mary is nearly as ugly as Susan.

"Eleven-thirty, rehearsal—you understand?" said the man. "Hello! it's nearly that now." He took out a big watch. "You can wait here if you like—or go, but be back sharp. Which'll you do?"

"Wait!" breathed Glenda and I together. The man's eyes twinkled.

"Stage-struck, eh?" he asked.

Now, if there is one thing Glenda and I do hate above all others it is being told we are stage-struck, and Glenda began telling him how we loved art for art's sake—and were not like some girls we knew, fascinated by the glitter of the footlights—and how we were the kind of people who made the stage better, and she for one was going to do all she could to improve it—though she meant to drink champagne occasionally, because it looks so pretty and tingly. But in the middle of what she was saying the man laughed and walked off.

We found a rickety chair in a corner, and we both sat on it. We would have liked to look around for the green-room, but we felt we hadn't the right to. "After the rehearsal we'll be real actresses and then we'll be taken to it," Glenda said, so we tried to be patient.

It was very close and dusty in there. Two little sun-streaks came in through a window in the peanut gallery, where a shutter was half open. They looked awfully out of place—those little sun-streaks. The thought came to me that they were something like Glenda and me, and I told Glenda so; but she said she felt perfectly at home—in fact, she said she had never felt so much at home before. Indeed, at last she felt her foot to be upon her native heath. I said I felt my foot to be upon my native heath, too, but I was getting awfully sleepy. Just then something happened to wake me up.

It was a young man in a gray suit and a cane tucked under his arm. He came in whistling. He had light, curly hair and blue eyes—rather watery. His skin looked rough and pinkish. He wasn't quite as beautiful as he had been other times when we had seen

him, but we knew him. We turned and gazed at each other. *It was Harold Carton!*

Glenda said she didn't do it on purpose, and I don't think she did, because she wouldn't have dared; but just then the nickel she was going to pay her fare home with rolled out of her purse. It flew over the floor like a little hoop and landed at Harold's feet. Wasn't that the most romantic thing you ever heard of? Glenda and I often said afterward we never heard of anything quite so poetical.

He looked sharply up and saw us. Then he picked up the nickel and brought it over to us and handed it to Glenda. I wonder how he knew it was Glenda's. I asked Glenda, and she cast down her eyes and said, "*He knew!*" He certainly did know; but if Glenda Wilderson thinks he liked her any better than he did me, well—he didn't. He may have handed the nickel to Glenda, but he smiled at me. It was his regular stage smile, that I've paid a dollar to see loads of times.

Glenda thanked him, and he said, "Don't mention it!" perfectly dearly and sat down. Yes, I can write it calmly now. Time is a great eradicator, even of moments such as this.

"Please allow me to introduce myself," he said, just as if we were grown; "I am Harold Carton. It is etiquette to be on speaking terms with members of the company. You are of the company, are you not?"

"Yes," said Glenda, and if her voice thrilled with pride no one could blame her. I said "Yes," too. Then Glenda said her name was Editha Earle and mine was Mary Gilbert.

"Surely not!" he said, looking very much surprised. "Surely this is Olga Nethersole"—looking at me—"and I could have sworn our friend here was Ethel Barrymore." And he looked at Glenda. This is exactly what he did, but Glenda says he looked at *her* for Nethersole and at *me* for Ethel Barrymore. Glenda is crazy about Nethersole.

Glenda told him we weren't anybody

but ourselves, and he looked more surprised still.

"Strange—strange," he kept saying, "incredible!" Then he asked us what our parts were, and when we told him we came on in the ballroom scene he said:

"Those difficult thinking parts? Ah, yes."

He was so sympathetic Glenda told him all, and he listened and agreed with everything she said. I did not talk much, because—well, somehow I couldn't talk to a real actor as if he were an ordinary person; it seemed almost profane—like talking to an angel. But I listened, and sometimes he would turn and smile at me. I counted and he smiled fifteen times; that's a good deal more than you'd get at a matinee for a dollar.

Then suddenly we noticed lots of people had come in, and men were bustling about changing things and putting things in their places, and the manager's typewriter had come, and there were some grown-up girls standing at the back of the stage looking sort of strange and uncomfortable. Then the manager's typewriter called for the ten young ladies of the ballroom scene.

Harold said he was loath to see us go—those were his very words—and we got up and walked upon the stage. The M. T.—that stands for manager's typewriter; it's too long to keep writing it all out—the M. T. stood us about in groups and told us to smile, and when to laugh, and when to murmur to each other. Then Harold came in, and a pale woman with tired eyes and hair that needed fixing, and they made love to each other. I told Glenda I did not see what he wanted to make love to her for. Glenda whispered that she had always enjoyed seeing Harold make love before, but somehow she wished he wouldn't now. I wished he wouldn't, too. And she was a perfect sight—not a real actress; anybody could see that. She seemed to care a terrible lot about Harold, though, and when he said they must part she just couldn't control herself and burst right

out crying and sniffing—perfectly awful. You would think she would have been ashamed to make such an exhibition of herself before all those people, wouldn't you? I didn't think much of her.

Then suddenly the M. T. waved his arms and said:

"The young ladies of the ballroom scene may go. Be at the theatre at seven sharp this evening. You may dress at home or bring your costumes with you. Do you all know your colors?"

We went right out, but before we did so Harold said something to us.

"Good-bye," he said. "Nay, *au revoir*. I shall see you tonight—ah, say I shall see you tonight!"

The pale woman was standing right there, and I felt awfully sorry for her. She laughed, but that was to pretend she didn't care—I've done that myself when Jack Marshall says he thinks Glenda is pretty.

"Good-bye. Nay, *au revoir*. I shall see you tonight—ah, say I shall see you tonight!"

He looked at me when he said it. Glenda thought he looked at her.

I do not wish the gentle reader to imagine that we never got back home again, because I left off where we were at the theatre. We did, but I got tired of writing, and I thought the reader could imagine the trip home for himself. At my door Glenda kissed my brow and breathed, "Sister artiste!" and left me.

We had already planned how we were going to get away that night. Mama had promised I could spend the night with Glenda; so after supper I kissed her good night and put my dress in a bundle—she thought it was my nightgown—and went out. It was light, or she would have made Kitty go with me. On the next corner I found Glenda. She had told her mother she was going to spend the night with me. Our plan was for each of us to go to our own home after the theatre, and say we were homesick and couldn't sleep away from home. I would like

the reader to know I made up most of the plan.

"Have you got your dress?" I said to Glenda, and she squeezed my hand and giggled and skipped and said she had.

It seemed queer to be riding on the cars at night without some older person. Every tiny little thing seemed exciting—the lights and the people, even the very rattle of the car bumping along.

The car was crowded.

"Just think, they are going to *see us!*" Glenda whispered to me. But not all of them went to see us—a good many got off at the other theatres. However, there were many with better discrimination.

When the car finally stopped with a jar at the opera house we got off with the rest of the crowd. It was interesting to think how all those people imagined us ordinary persons like themselves. Little did they guess that two actresses were walking in their midst—the very actresses they had bought tickets to see. Glenda wanted to talk out loud about "the performance" and "making up" and "my costumes," so they would realize who we were; but I thought she had better not, as you never can tell who's around; and I've often noticed as surely as you say you think Clara May is the silliest girl you ever met and you hate the way she wears her hair, there will be her mother behind you. Glenda answered that she didn't care who knew she had launched upon her career, but she stopped talking just the same.

We left the crowd struggling into the great, bright lobby, and went around to the stage door. It was quite dark and gloomy; only a feeble little electric light covered with dust lit the way in. We didn't know where to go, but, an old man showed us. It was a room about as big as our servant's room on the third floor, and all the young ladies were in it. They were painting their cheeks and putting on their dresses.

"The idea of letting those kids take part!" one of them said, as Glenda

and I came in. We had on our own dresses now and our pigtails.

"Wonder if they brought their bottles along—they'll surely be cryin' for them before the show's through, if they didn't," another girl said. She had a familiar look about her. Afterward I remembered she was at the ribbon counter of a store on Front street.

Glenda and I didn't say anything, but began to dress. The girls stopped talking about us and began to talk about themselves. The ribbon-counter girl said she had refused six offers to star that season. Another girl said she was going into opera next year. Then all the other girls began saying how sweet everyone thought they were and how pretty.

Glenda and I went on dressing. When Glenda had finished and was pinning a rose in her hair I heard one of the girls give a gasp. All the other girls turned and began staring at Glenda. And no wonder! No one was so pretty. She looked like a beautiful, grown-up lady, only her face was rosier and fresher and brighter-eyed than any lady I ever saw.

"The little fat one looks nice, too," I heard one of the girls whisper. I never heard such impertinence.

Well, after awhile the orchestra struck up. It was the first time we had heard it from this side of the curtain, and a queer feeling went over me like ice water. If I hadn't known I wasn't I would have thought I was afraid. Glenda's eyes got very big and her cheeks went white.

"How familiar it sounds!" one of the girls said. And then they all began saying it, and the ribbon-counter girl said:

"It's such an old story to me, that band, I don't even hear it. I guess you girls haven't been on very long, or you wouldn't hear it either."

Then somebody called, "Fifteen minutes!" and somebody came in and told us for the Lord's sake to come on out, and we were led between boards and past electric lights into another room. It was quite a pretty room, all done in

green. There was a big green-covered floor, and a staircase at the back which was quite pretty in front, but all rough and shaky-looking behind. I whispered to Glenda it must certainly be the greenroom. Then the M. T. came in in his shirt sleeves and said not to look so stiff, and to smile, and said, "Shut that up!" quite rudely when the ribbon-counter girl giggled. The orchestra was playing softly, very far away, a dreamy waltz, and I was just whispering to Glenda how lovely it sounded, when all at once one side of the room was swept away. There rose up in its place a great wall of faces, one above the other, up, up, up. My head turned dizzy and I shut my eyes. Glenda said afterward she had known perfectly well we were on the stage and that the curtain had gone up, but just the same when I felt well enough to look at her she was whiter than a marshmallow and the ruffles on her dress were trembling.

"Smile, smile! *Can't* you smile?" a hollow voice whispered, and there was the M. T. in his shirt sleeves glaring at us. So we smiled, and then he said, "Murmur!" and we murmured, and then—in came Harold!

I wish you could have seen him! He had on evening dress, and he held his head up so beautifully, and his feet looked so bright and nice, and, as Glenda expressed it, his head was like a field of waving gold. He looked rather worried, though, and began saying how much he wanted to get married, but that Estelle would make it so deuced hard for him. We wondered who Estelle was, but suddenly he cried, "Estelle!" as a lady came in, and so we knew. It was the tired lady of the morning, but she didn't look tired now, and her cheeks were pink, and her hair was all smooth and wavy—I never saw anyone so much improved. Then Harold made love to her, and—would you believe it?—she began crying and sniffing again! I was so mortified I forgot to murmur.

We were supposed not to be hearing Harold and Estelle, but it was very hard to pretend we didn't. After

awhile, though, I stopped listening to them of my own accord and looked out at the faces. I was trying to count them when Harold said:

"Though she whom I marry will share my name, never doubt that you alone possess my heart!"

I jumped when I heard that. You see, the M. T. had told us to go off the stage when we heard those words, and I heard him now whispering, "Come off!" I started to go, but then I remembered Glenda and looked back. Then I stood still, looking.

Would I could paint for you the picture I beheld. But as I cannot I will simply say that Glenda was cutting up like anything. There she was, fluttering her fan and smiling and laughing and raising her eyebrows, and murmuring away like a stream to the ribbon-counter girl. She was murmuring real loud, too, all sorts of little sentences and phrases—things I have heard Bernice say. And then I noticed some people in a box staring at her, whispering and smiling, the way people always do when they first see Glenda, as if they thought her the prettiest girl in the world—as she is. Then the M. T. said, "Come off!" and I jumped again, and came, and Glenda came, too, only fluttering her fan and looking back and smiling and taking as long as possible about it.

"Can't you mind your cues?" growled the M. T., and then he smiled and said, "You're all right, Miss Earle—a first-rate little actress."

Glenda liked that, but just the same if she hadn't fluttered and smiled and murmured quite so much, and been quite such a first-rate little actress, we might now be sending autographs to schoolgirls and having our pictures taken in low-neck gowns and big hats, and thrilling a delighted public nightly. As it is, we spend our days in study and our nights in sleep, which is certainly very stupid and commonplace. Why this is so, and why the other isn't, I am about to tell.

We stood in the wings and Glenda danced about restlessly and wished she

could go on again, and then Harold joined us.

"My dear Miss Nethersole," he said to me, "you are radiantly lovely, and our friend—" he looked up as if words were not enough to express her beauty. Glenda and I were speechless for happiness.

"Your work tonight was admirable," he said. "Never have I seen a ballroom sparkle with such scintillant thought!"

Glenda was dimpling and blushing.

"Oh, did we really do well?" she cried, delighted.

"If 'The Great Emerald Robbery' pleases Brownstown it will be because Miss Earle and Miss Gilbert honored it with their efforts," he said grandly.

"When do you think I can star?" asked Glenda. But she was never answered. Just then someone touched her arm.

"A gentleman wishes to see you," was what they said.

All unsuspecting, Glenda and I wandered in the direction we were told to go. I think Glenda imagined the gentleman was what you call a "Johnnie," who had come to bring her some candy and a big bunch of violets. I thought it might be a writer for the Sunday dramatic page, come for an interview. But it was neither.

There were two men talking rather excitedly together under a big paper palm. One was telling the other he would have to go out; it was against the rules during a performance. And the other said he wouldn't. Then he turned and—and—

It was Glenda's brother Bertrand!

When I take dinner at my grandfather's he always asks me questions in arithmetic. It gives you a queer, seasick feeling, and you don't want any dinner. I felt that same queer way when I saw the familiar features of Bertrand Wilderson.

I don't believe Glenda was actually glad to see him either, but anyway she smiled and put out her hands.

"Why, Bertie, what are you doing here?" she said.

Bertrand's face was blacker than a

thunder-cloud, but he smiled a little then, the way you can imagine a thunder-cloud might.

"The question might be put to you," he said, low and angrily. Then his frown got blacker and blacker and he came close to Glenda.

"Put on your hat. Susan, put yours on, too. I'll give you just two minutes."

"Why, 'Trandy dear, it isn't over yet! In the last act—'"

"Put on your hat."

Just then a group of ballroom girls passed us on their way to the dressing-room.

"Don't humiliate me before them," Glenda pleaded.

"Humiliate your grandmother!" said Bertrand. "By George, Glenda, you get your hat or you'll go home without one."

We got our hats. The ballroom girls tittered, and the ribbon-counter girl said: "They want their bottles; they forgot them, so they're going home. Poor, sleepy dears!"

Silently we put our everyday clothes into a bundle and went out. Harold came off the stage just then and seemed to understand at once.

"Never mind, girls," he said; "you were the best thing in the play, anyway—and a long way the prettiest."

We were too choked to answer. Ambition crushed, heads drooping, eyes hot with unshed tears, our very souls sick unto death, like sleepers awakened from some golden dream, silently we followed Bertrand out into the night.

Glenda and I were not allowed to see each other for three weeks. It was a punishment unworthy of parents, and we told them so. We saw each other every day at school, but of course that didn't count. And the teacher had

instructions not to let us play together at recess.

But righteousness cannot forever be suppressed. Sooner or later it will rise above oppression. It rose the next day, in history class, when Miss Martin was pointing out places on the map.

Glenda wrote a note to me and pushed it over. Then I wrote one to her, and together we made up this letter, which Glenda mailed that evening.

Miss Editha Earle and Miss Floretta Gilbert (she made a mistake when she said her name was Mary) present their compliments to Manager Baldwin, though they did not meet him, and wish to inform him that they can't take part in "The Great Emerald Robbery" any more.

We felt terribly after it was written. I wrote another note to Glenda and pushed it over. It said:

I don't see what they are going to do, do you? It will break up the whole play.

Glenda wrote back:

Have you thought it may break something more than a play?

I had to think a long time over that; then I wrote back:

He did like us terribly, didn't he?

Glenda gazed dreamily into her ink-well after she read that, and what authors call an inscrutable smile played about her lips. Then, still with that knowing look upon her face, she wrote something and passed it over to me.

It was so conceited I cannot bring myself to tell the reader what it was. You would think Glenda the vainest girl you ever heard of, if I did. I wish to say, however—and I am sure the gentle reader will believe me—that whatever Glenda Wilderson may have thought about it, Harold liked me best.



DEAD EASY

"HE says he wants a wife who is his exact opposite in everything."
"What a fool! Any woman will be that after he marries her."

THE HOUSE BY THE WAY

By Margery Williams

IT seemed the only house on the road, which, for the last five miles since he left Birchville, had stretched, flat and dusty and featureless, edged by barren pasture land overgrown with brambles and huckleberry bushes, with here and there a stunted tree to break the monotony. He slowed his bicycle as he drew near, looking at the small square dwelling, with its whitewashed fence and green shutters, and a tiny unpainted barn at the back, and a little patch of cultivated ground in which, between rows of bean-poles and cabbages, he could see the moving flutter of a woman's skirt. She had her back toward him, stooping to gather something. She turned as he stopped at the gate, and he could see her hands full of green leaves and earthy roots.

"Can you tell me—?" he began, dismounting, and then paused as he saw her coming toward him. When she moved something about her struck him instantly as incongruous—he could not have told what. She was young and should have been pretty, but that her hair was strained back too tightly from her face, giving her a look of plainness. She wore a pink cotton blouse, washed many times and faded, and a short cloth skirt that sagged ungracefully at the back.

"I'm going to ask you," he began again pleasantly as she came near, "to let me have a drink at your pump and then put me on the right road for Allentown."

Directly she spoke the incongruity resolved itself. She had the voice of his own native city, clear-cut, educated.

"This is the Allentown road," she

said, "and won't you come in, please? The pump is just around at the side."

She held open the unlatched gate and he leaned his wheel against the fence and followed her in. There was a tin dipper turned upside down on the pump top; he filled it and drank. The water tasted good after seven miles of dusty riding.

While he was drinking he observed her again. There was a curious restlessness in her face, a look at once eager and disappointed. It was the expression that comes to those who have watched empty roads for a long time. He glanced at her hands. They were earth-stained and squared at the finger-tips by outdoor work, and they, too, had the same nervous lines, the same tired wistfulness.

"I suppose it's very hot riding," she said as he set the dipper down.

"Scorching!"

He glanced about him at the tidy garden patch, with its lines of beans and tomatoes, a few summer annuals blooming here and there among the sober green and brown—phlox and marigolds and nasturtiums.

"You have a nice garden here," he said.

"Yes. It's very quiet."

She dropped the lettuce she was holding into a half-filled bucket that stood near. Her eyes met his, and this time there was something childish in their look, almost an appeal. She hesitated a moment, then said:

"Allentown is eight miles from here. Won't you come into the house and have some tea before you go on? I was just going to make it."

He looked at his dusty boots.

"I am alone just now," she said quickly. "And it is so quiet here—no one ever comes. One is so glad to see anybody."

He murmured some vague thanks as she turned abruptly, averting her head, and followed her up the little trodden path to the open door. It was a two-room cottage, with a little lean-to shed at the back, built for a summer kitchen. She slipped past to it, and he could hear her dragging the kettle across the stove and clinking cups and saucers.

Left to himself a moment, he looked about him with swift, observant eyes. Everything in the room was very plain, very simple, spotlessly clean—white-washed walls and bare floor, and the scantiest of plain-made furniture. There were one or two good pictures, oil sketches and an engraving after Millet; some marigolds in a bowl on the mantel-shelf, near an old pewter jug; a row of books on a long, unpainted shelf against the wall. A man's straw hat lay on a chair, frayed and shabby and burnt by the sun, and he seemed to see instinctively the kind of man that wore it. The whole room spoke of him—its ascetic bareness, its uncompromising utility.

He moved to the book-shelf, knowing in advance what books he would find there. The whole house laid bare its story to him frankly, on entry, and the story of the wistful, restless-faced woman with the city voice. His gaze traveled along the titles, some familiar, some unfamiliar, and as he turned away again he caught sight of a small framed picture of "The Master" hung from a nail in the whitewashed wall. The man's mouth curved curiously as he looked at it.

The girl came in from the kitchen, carrying a brown teapot and some cups, which she set down on the table.

"There isn't any cake," she said. "I'm so sorry, but we don't have company often! And you can eat bread and butter, can't you? And there's a cantaloup."

She was making little journeys to and from the kitchen while she talked.

"I know it's unmannerly, asking you in like this, but you don't mind, do you? and we're quite strangers, so it doesn't matter. One so seldom sees guests here that one likes to make the most of them." She laughed, and he could read the nervous restlessness in her voice, the hunger born of monotony. "Won't you pull that chair up?—that's right. Do you take sugar? It's such an age since I poured out tea for anyone!"

There was almost a defiance in her friendliness, her frankness, her reckless eagerness to make the most of this chance hour's companionship. She ate scarcely anything herself; all the time she was watching him, listening to him, chatting in a quick, detached way about one thing and another. She offered him melon and brown bread and butter. Gradually there grew up for him in her face, her manner, something quaintly childish, infinitely pitiful. All the loneliness of her life spoke to him wistfully, tentatively, in this room with its unhome-like furnishing, its air of emptiness. Mentally he was trying to put her back into the world where she belonged, the surroundings that would have made an attractive woman of her. There was something strange about her—the simple strangeness that looks at us out of the eyes of children and animals. Life had at least done this extraordinary thing for her.

When he had finished she still kept pressing him to take more. His hand moved unthinkingly to his coat pocket, and she noticed the gesture instantly.

"Yes, do smoke; I wish you would."

He lit his pipe.

"Do you live here all the year round?" he asked.

"Yes. Summer and winter."

"Not alone?"

She flushed very slightly. "My husband is away today. He is up in the city. Generally he is at home. I expect him back in an hour or so."

He looked round him again at the bare room, indecent in its silent avowal; at her, sitting there with her

restless face; her work-hardened hands, and risked all his psychological insight in one simple cast.

"My dear girl, why on earth did you do it?"

She laughed.

"Why? Oh, it's easy, isn't it? So you know." She leaned back, her fingers gripping the chair-edge. "It's all written out for you—you can just come right in here and read it. I suppose I did it because I was a fool—a fool—a fool! There! I suppose you wonder at my sitting here saying it to you, but I've just got to that point I'd say it to anyone—just anyone at all that came along!"

All the childishness went from her face. She rose, pushing the tea things aside, and moved about the room.

"I guess I don't have to tell you anything, do I? I was young and stupid and I didn't know anything, and it all sounded very simple and beautiful, and I wanted to try it. I thought it would work. A two-room cottage and some books and an acre of ground. Well, I've found it out. Isn't it funny—isn't it humorous—the sort of thing you read about in books? My God! Do you know when you came along today I'd got to such a pitch I was nearly crazy. I felt I had to have someone to speak to, someone to talk to—just anyone at all so long as it was a stranger I could tell it all to and then have him go away and forget every word! And if you hadn't come in I'd have made you, if I had to go down on my knees to you! Isn't that shameless? Don't you guess I'm crazy?"

She had spoken quickly, breathlessly, as though every moment were of value and she had to get the words out before he should go his traveler's way and leave her. Now as she stopped short her hand went out and clung to the chair-back, working nervously.

"How old are you?" he said.

"How old do you think?"

"Thirty?"

She laughed again.

"Yes. I knew you'd guess that!"

I'm twenty-five. That's what it's done for me. I used to be pretty. You wouldn't guess it, would you? I was. Look at my hands—aren't they lovely? And I've had four years of it—four years. It was all right at first—I liked it. I thought it would go on always. But it didn't—I found it out. If anyone had told me that, three years ago, I'd have laughed. I wouldn't have believed it. But I've found it out. *He* hasn't. He thinks it's all right still. And he'll never know it. That's the funny part. I care just so much for him still that I'd hate to have him find it out, to know it was all a big, mad failure. So I've got to stick to it. Only sometimes . . . sometimes . . ."

She moved nearer to him, across the bare floor.

"I'm so glad you came today," she said. "I'm so glad. Because if you hadn't I'd have gone crazy. I would! I wanted someone to tell it all to. Do you know I've gone out and talked to the cabbages, sometimes. Isn't that a symptom of insanity? Well, I've done that, before now. But cabbages are dumb—I never knew how dumb they were before. And you're a stranger—we've never met before and we never will again, and you can go right off and forget it. Don't think me a fool—I'm not, really. Only, I had to tell someone. Now I'll be better; I've had it all out and over, and I can go on for another four years."

"You poor little soul!" he said.
"You poor little soul!"

He put out his hand and for a moment she clung to it.

"Yes, that was it—to tell someone. It just got on my nerves. Because I never see a soul here—never, never! I get sick for a strange face. Just this half-hour—hasn't it changed me? Oh, I know it! Am I the same woman you met at the gate?"

It was true; he had seen it, even while she was talking. She led the way out to the garden.

"Look at my marigolds!—aren't they dears? They grow better than anything else here. That's the Allen-

town road, but I'll walk a little way with you. I've got to fetch the cow in before supper-time."

He walked beside her, leading his bicycle. It was nearing sundown, and the level surrounding pasture land was flooded with a gold-green haze. Some poplars stood up flat against the skyline, and the road stretched like a gray, empty scroll.

They walked slowly and in silence. The cow was tethered to a bush near the roadside.

"I must leave you here," she said. "No, it's all right—I can manage. And you'll keep straight on. I don't think there are any turnings."

They shook hands again. And then it was that the real secret of the strange little house, the one thing that she hadn't told him, rose pitifully and spoke.

"I sha'n't see you again," she said. "Won't you . . . kiss me?"

When he looked back, after riding a little distance, he could see her still, a lonely blur of pink against the dull green bushes. And behind her the cottage, small and square, caught the light on its shingled roof and whitewashed walls, like a monument set in the wilderness to the unknown god.



THE IMPERSONAL

I AM in love with love. Therefore I lose
The power to be in love. Oh, better far
That I should watch its varying beauteousness
Than to let vexing Passion fret and jar
And crush love's crown of thorns upon my brow—
Fled then were the delights which so enchant me now!

For now these men and women wrapped in love
Belong to me! All, all become as mine.
Tenderly their long drama I behold—
The jealousy, the swimming eyes divine,
The rush, the checking of their wilful feet,
The splendid torments which become so sweet.

And I can pity with a kindly smile
Their madness, since apart from them I see
The glory and the glamour of their days
As they, self-centered, cannot. . . . Over me
Love hath no power. Therefore do I own
Love as my servant, serving me alone.

CLINTON DANGERFIELD.



THE WISDOM OF SILENCE

"IF Pamela is engaged I can't understand why she doesn't announce it."
"Probably she is afraid it will prevent her catching a husband."

A WAGNERIAN MOTIF

By Guy R. Bolton

SOCIETY, like every well-guarded camp, is constantly changing its countersign. At the time I attended Mrs. Barry's musical it was Wagner with a V—thus obtaining an alliterative hold on the popular ear for the current phrase of the "Vachgner vogue."

This, of course, kept out a good many people who should have been kept out; but it also let in some it should not. It let me in because I had once done a tour through Germany and had there learned to pronounce the password; it let in Anton Vetter because he was a professional—just as when later the word was changed to golf—without an "I"—we procured Archie McGinn to sandpaper our irons and to play the course in forty-six; and finally it let in Agnes Tobin for the same reason she will some day be admitted to heaven—because it is a man who opens the door.

Now, I did not know Agnes Tobin was going to be there, and Mrs. Barry had taken good care I should not know, for Wagner made her short of men and I know she wanted me to come.

When, however, two of her hired minions had taken my hat and coat and left me helpless in her hands, Mrs. Barry came up and greeted me.

"I have a surprise upstairs for you," she smiled. "Weren't you once—ah—used you not to know Agnes Shultz—rather well?"

I shook my head. "Some other handsome young man."

"Possibly—you boys are all so alike. I never am sure, but I thought I remembered her saying she knew you. She was Agnes Tobin, you know," she

concluded, with retrospective disconnection.

I turned on her indignantly.

"I had always given you credit for some feeling, but to break the news in this way!"

"Oh, you do know her, then?"

"My dear Mrs. Barry, is there a man in this room who does not? Because if there is he will not long remain in that enviable state, unless she has changed more than I should think possible in the last six years."

Mrs. Barry looked at me long and pityingly.

"*Et tu?*" she murmured.

"Yes," I admitted grudgingly. "I also did my best to keep her from stooping to a Teutonic surname."

"Her husband is German only in his taste for music and lager."

"I know—one of those disgusting bohemians, which, Mrs. Barry, is the self-applied title of a class of people who drink beer when it's their treat and champagne when it's yours."

Mrs. Barry laughed. "His addiction to the bohemian beverage is, I believe, but common gratitude, as all his money was made in brewing it."

"What, Mrs. Barry? Have the brewers penetrated even to these fastnesses?"

"Don't alarm yourself; we are quite unsullied, I assure you. The money has passed through refining testamentary flames. But don't you really want to see Agnes?"

"Heaven forbid!" I ejaculated fervently.

"What a pity! She said she wanted to have a long talk with you."

"Where is she?" I demanded savagely.

Mrs. Barry indicated a circle of black coats. "Over there, I expect. Good-bye; probably I shall not see you again this evening."

I smiled viciously. "I am only going over to tell her she looks fat—and forty," I replied, as I turned and threaded my way across the crowded room, in which everyone seemed to be talking Wagner in the same high-pitched key, while one lady, standing by the piano, was singing him in several.

I have always been brought up to believe, however, that it is polite to applaud even amateur recitations in society; so as she seated herself—thus satisfying me that it was not one of those musical pauses into which I have sometimes obtruded my hand-clapping—I turned and commenced a vigorous applause. But, to my astonishment, instead of others joining me I heard a prolonged "s-s-sh!" run the length of the room; and I am sure I saw one lady raise jeweled fingers to her ears.

"He has not changed in the least," said a voice behind me.

I faced about. It was Agnes Tobin. She smiled and held out her hand.

"Perhaps you did not know Madam Hoffenstein was interpreting a motif?" she asked. "As you are aware, I'm sure, it is not correct to applaud Wagner."

"Of course. I often wonder how people can do it—even after some of his most sublime passages, as many of them do."

We laughed simultaneously as the absurdity of such words, after a six years' hiatus, occurred to us.

"Have you been at Quogue lately?" she asked.

"My memory and your face are at variance as to the date. The former sets it at a half-dozen years, the latter at—yesterday."

"I must beg leave to trust your memory then; or else accept as alternative the yet more awful truth that I have gained thirty pounds in a night. But come; don't you want to take me to the balcony? It is so warm in here.

You will excuse us"—she turned to the other members of the group—"Mr. Fenton is a very old friend."

I threw a handsome ermine cloak about her shoulders, wondering vaguely how many bottles of beer it was worth, and we stepped out into the plant-fringed loggia. I found a couple of wickers and placed them side by side, facing in opposite directions, as we used to do on the veranda of the hotel at Quogue.

Mrs. Shultze laughed. The laugh struck me as having grown very material, but perhaps I had cherished my divinity so long it had become more etherealized than the original had ever been.

"Your musical tastes seem to be all that has changed in you," she commented. "Let's see—it was 'Daisy, Daisy,' in that halcyon time, I think."

"It is still 'Daisy, Daisy,'" I replied. "I am nothing if not constant."

"But tonight it is Wagner?"

"My dear Mrs. Shultze, some are born to Wagner, some achieve Wagner, while others have Wagner thrust upon them. I belong to this latter class."

"What sacrilege! And listen, Anton has just commenced to sing. How full his voice sounds from here!"

"How strange! It appears quite steady to me."

Mrs. Shultze ignored my remark. "And how well he remembers my favorites—poor, faithful Anton!"

"You know him, then?"

"My dear Tommy, one might suppose you had really thrown yourself from the dock, as you threatened to do that last day at the shore, and had only just been reincarnated. Know him, indeed! Why, Tommy, I made Anton Vetter."

"Made him?"

"Yes, I spurred his ambition; I advertised him; I spread his fame; I did everything for him—except the one thing he asked."

"Ah," I said, "I see! Poor, faithful Anton, indeed."

There was an eloquent pause, filled only with the voice of the great artist

and the sound of intermittent carriage wheels on the drive beneath us.

"Won't you tell me about it?" I said.

"I don't believe I ought," she replied in a voice hesitant only for my insistence.

"Why, I judged from what you said that everybody knows."

"Yes, I suppose they do; but it's a long time ago now."

"It must have been soon after—after Quogue, then?"

"It was just after Quogue. My aunt took me to Europe, you remember, ostensibly to finish my education, but really to find me a duke. We stayed in England nearly six months, though, and never met one. We almost did once, but it rained and he didn't turn up; so I told my aunt if rain was going to keep them away it was no use to stay, because it didn't stop raining long enough for one to come. And after a few weeks more we crossed the Channel to see if the kind that spell it d-u-c were not more attainable."

"At least they could not have been afraid of the rain. Water proverbially runs off their backs."

"I sha'n't go on if you are going to make such horrid puns. No, the trouble with the ducs was that none of them had an income as big as his debts, while I couldn't exactly pose as an heiress. So then, as winter was coming on, I persuaded my aunt to go to Germany, and we went and settled down in Dresden at a small hotel in the Schloss-Platz, near the Hof Kirche. I was in the throes of my first Wagnerian enthusiasm at the time, and I used to actually live in the *Opernhaus*. I knew a couple of boys who were studying at the conservatory and we easily drifted into the musical set through them. It was in this way that I met Leonard Shultz and Anton Vetter. It was the year of their first general popularity in Dresden; they had both been quite notably successful, and even greater things were promised for them. Their voices were much of the same range and volume, so that considerable rivalry existed between them; which did not decrease after they met me,

but rather took the form of seeing which of them could monopolize the greater part of my time."

"I presume that between them they succeeded in doing that pretty completely?"

"Well, I liked them both, and I just loved their voices. Anton's, if anything, pleased me the more, but Leonard had been born and educated in America, and so I found him, perhaps, the more congenial. We used to have the most delightful excursions to the Albrechtsburg, and Leonard came around almost every afternoon to take me driving. I knew they were neglecting their work horribly, but I couldn't curtail the attentions of one without rousing his smoldering jealousy against the other. It was really very funny to hear them. Pointed comment, however, as to their falling off in form and the ruin that might be inflicted on their careers at this juncture reached me from every side, and I felt that something must be done, not only for their sakes, but for the sake of the whole musical world."

"Neither of them had yet placed you in a position to end it?"

"My dear Tommy, they had proposed *ad nauseam*; but I did not feel prepared to choose or to dismiss either."

"In fact, you did not know which you loved?"

"I am not sure that I loved either of them—then; but, as I say, I adored their voices. At length, however, I determined on a plan that would spur my two friends' ambitions and at the same time help me decide which I really cared for the more. Of course I never meant it to go so far as it did, and when I said to the boys that I should 'just love the man that sang *Tristan*', with their experience of my extravagant expressions, I don't see why they should have taken my words literally."

"You see it was definitely assured that either Vetter or Shultz would be assigned to the part in the forthcoming production of the opera, and interest in the choice was already manifested in musical circles. But this in-

terest was nothing compared to that which suddenly sprang up when a story got into circulation—how, I don't know—that 'Miss Tobin had promised to bestow her hand on the winner of this crowning palm of the opera season'! The absurd yarn was accepted at once, and explained as the latest freak of an American girl—that creature whose real or ascribed extravagances make it the more utterly impossible every day for one of us to get into a lunatic asylum.

"It was not long before I found out the truth of the remark I once heard you make, that 'notoriety is the mother of invention,' for echoes of the supposed bargain, garnished and embellished by a thousand tellings, reached me from every side. At first I was awfully humiliated, of course, but as I became used to it the idea began to grow upon me. It was just the sort of scheme to appeal to a romantic girl who was in constant protest against the vulgar ideals and sordid basis of our modern civilization; and so, little by little, was born the determination I at length made to accept the terms to which everyone, including the boys, seemed to think I had already committed myself. Meanwhile excitement ran quite high. The English residents made bets on the subject, as if it had been a prize-fight; and indeed, there was some excuse for viewing it in such a light, for the two principals had gone into training with coaches and long rehearsals of the part; while many rumors were about purporting to come from the training quarters as to the progress they were making or the promises they claimed to have received from Herr Bilse, the director, and the man upon whom the responsibility of the choice fell. He, good man, was making the most of the advertisement the forthcoming production was getting, and keeping up the excitement by remaining absolutely noncommittal as to his intentions.

"There was one stipulation I had insisted upon, and that was that neither of them should see me, nor would I even read a letter from either

of them until after the first night of the opera. This was to prevent one having the disquieting feeling that while he was practicing in his rooms his rival might be enjoying the afternoon in the Waldschlösschen with the prize of the contest."

"Such an instance of feminine equity," I broke in, "is only less astonishing than the esoteric fatalism with which you seem to have regarded the outcome."

"Yes, I know. I believe I was the only non-partisan in Dresden. Auntie espoused the Vetter cause for no better reason than that Anton had a cousin who was a baron.

"As the day came round popular excitement increased.

"Der Dresdener Anzeiger announced that royalty were coming from Albrechtsburg to grace the evening's performance and that Herr Bilse had presented the opposite box to Fräulein Tobin. I laughed as I read this, but later, when the letters came, I received a courteous note from the director inclosing the billet. I suppose it was all part of the advertisement. Poor auntie was awfully horrified at the publicity the whole affair had been given, but I think sitting in the opposite box to members of the royal family was too much for her to resist; and so we arrayed ourselves *en grande parure* and invited all the Americans in Dresden who owned dress suits to go with us, which invitation they both accepted with alacrity.

"One of the most interesting features of the affair was that the director—evidently relying on the fact that both Shultz and Vetter were in excellent training for the part—was still as inscrutable as the Sphinx; but, as I was dressing in the evening the maid brought in a box containing a superb bunch of Parma violets, on top of which was laid a note addressed to me in Leonard Shultz's handwriting. I was just dying to read it, but I remembered my promise and resolutely laid it aside. I naturally felt, however, as I pinned on the flowers, that I must be wearing the victor's insignia.

"There was enough uncertainty, though, as we sat in the box before the curtain rose, to make my heart beat high. I was literally waiting for the curtain to rise and reveal to me my husband; and for the first time I began to loathe the scene of which all this was the outcome."

"But the program?"

"The program merely contained a blank after Tristan. Herr Bilse evidently did not intend shortening the period of uncertainty by a moment more than he could help, or perhaps he had not decided in time to have it put in. As usual, I found the suspense increasing as its dispellment became more imminent. The beautiful motif of the prelude was interminable. The 'Confession of Love' I felt to be a mockery; and indeed, the vast audience seemed to share my impatience. Their constantly recurrent utterance of the names of the two artists took the form of a pendulum, in my morbid fancy, swinging up with the questioning inflection—Vetter? Shultze? Vetter? Shultze?

"I heaved a sigh of relief as the curtain rose, and my eyes fastened on the tapestry draped across the boat, behind which stood the knightly helmsman to whose steering I should, I supposed, soon have to trust. I sat there tense and motionless during the opening colloquy, but at last, unable to tolerate the inaction, I turned to one of our companions. As I did so, Isolde gave her well-known appeal for air—she could never have needed it so much as I at that moment. Brangäne drew aside the curtain screening them from the men in the stern. I craned forward, but the proscenium arch obstructed my view. Tumults of applause burst forth from every corner of the house. I leaped up and seized the arm of a lady in the adjoining box.

"Which is it?" I demanded. "Which is it?"

"She faced me with a placid, bovine expression. 'Vetter, of course,' she said.

"I sank back without thanks or apology. The uproar had subsided. An-

ton Vetter was singing—singing, as I at first only dully realized, with a freedom and grace that far surpassed his usual work. Those three weeks of training had brought wonders indeed, and the flush of triumph rang in every note.

"It was not until the third act, however, that he really gave complete evidence of the remarkable powers he has since fully developed. The beautiful pathos of the dying warrior has never, I am sure, been more beautifully expressed. His rendering of '*Wie sie selig, hehr und milde*,' was exquisite, and as he ceased the assemblage, in defiance of all tradition, gave way to raptures of applause. I was completely carried away; my overwrought nerves demanded action. I leaped to my feet and, unfastening the flowers from my corsage, hurled them upon the stage.

"I saw a thousand faces turned toward our box. A revulsion of feeling passed over me as Anton sank on one knee and raised his rival's blossoms to his lips.

"'Let us go home,' I said to my aunt. I was sated of the spectacular. I longed for the cooling influence of Leonard's dollar-and-cents practicability—a trait I had so often despised. Poor, crushed, broken, defeated Leonard!"

As though in accompaniment of the narrative, Vetter's voice died away in a diminuendo on the last song of his cycle.

I intruded a question. "Where was Shultze?" I asked.

"Ah, that was what everyone was asking. The morning papers bore the startling news that he had disappeared, accompanied by sinister conjectures concerning the Elbe. I hastened to my room to read the note I had received, but fate had evidently conspired to cover up his disappearance completely. It was, like its sender, nowhere to be found. You can imagine my feelings when I reflected on what my silly idea had led to. Leonard's last act, then—if surmises were correct—had been the purchase of that bunch of flowers; a gift that I had

ruthlessly sacrificed in a tribute to his rival, whose cup had surely been full enough before. For two days I was given over to the keenest self-reproach, lightened only by an occasional gleam of hope.

"Inquiry, however, at length unearthed the fact that he had left Dresden two days before I had received his flowers, the order for which, accompanied by the note, had been given to a large florist in the See strasse. Anton gave me this news one night when he called. I had told him that the mystery must be cleared up before I could consider myself bound to receive him on the footing he seemed to think he had a right to demand.

"The mystery, however, remained unsolved for nearly two months, when, just as interest in the matter had begun to wane, I received a letter from Leonard bearing an American stamp and postmarked New York.

"The explanation was illuminatingly simple. He began by upbraiding me for not replying to his note. 'Surely I could appreciate that duty to one's family must come first with any right-feeling man?' He went on to say that the slender thread which bound his uncle to life had not broken for two weeks after his arrival—two weeks which he had spent, with scarcely a respite, at the dying man's bedside.

"My eyes filled as I read it; such self-sacrifice I had seldom heard of and never met. For a man to give up, as he had, his chances of fame; his hope of happiness—he told me again that his happiness was bound up in me—for a man to give up this was little short of sublime. I was again undecided. I did not feel, now I knew all, that I was bound to stick to the literal terms of my agreement. Still, Anton's position as a world-famed artist was assured, while poor Leonard would now have to come back and toil his way to a pinnacle of success, probably always lower than that of his erstwhile rival.

"I did not get another letter from Leonard for some time; but I received a newspaper giving the account of the funeral. His uncle, poor man, had done his best to show the appreciation he felt for a sacrifice he could never repay. In a testament dated a week before his demise he had willed Leonard the brew—ah—property, valued at half a million dollars."

"A most practical demonstration of nepotism."

"It was the least he could do."

"True; and at the same time it would be hardly possible for him to do more—but pray proceed."

"Where was I?"

"You were just thinking of returning to America," I said absently.

"Nonsense. You weren't listening. I was telling you about Leonard. Somehow I seemed to see him in a different light after that. The mutual bond of affection that must have existed between nephew and uncle established a new standard by which to judge his action. Anton could not understand it at all when I told him I at length knew that I had loved Leonard all along. He carried on terribly and insulted me by attributing my 'sudden change,' as he persisted in calling it, to the most unworthy motives; I could not forgive him for a long while; but I have gone twice to Europe expressly to hear him sing."

There was a long silence. I puffed silently and very, very contentedly at my cigar as I looked out into the distance of the city. My mental vision pierced even farther—in fact, as far as Quogue.

"Poor, faithful Leonard!" I murmured.

Mrs. Shultze laughed. "You never could remember names five minutes," she said. "You mean poor, faithful Anton."

"Of course," I replied. "But come, we must go in. The boys are planning my end, I expect, and I promised to take that little wife of mine home at half-past ten."



UN RÔLE DANGEREUX

Par Cyrille Hardy

LA jeune Mme Dorval entra en coup de vent; elle bouscula sans pitié papiers et livres qui s'éparpillèrent dans le cabinet de travail, et prenant entre ses deux petites mains potelées la tête de son mari, elle y déposa un baiser, un long baiser très tendre de nouvelle épousée.

Déjà six mois de ménage!... six mois de bonheur! Elle ne pouvait pas y croire.

Etait-ce là le mariage dont des amies plus âgées lui avaient fait un tableau si sombre? Etait-ce bien vrai qu'il y a des femmes qui détestent leur mari, des maris qui ne peuvent supporter leur femme, comme on lui en avait nommé plusieurs? Etait-il possible qu'il y eût des unions tragiques qui ne se délient que par le crime comme elle le lisait dans les romans et les comptes-rendus des tribunaux?

— Ecoute, mon chéri, dit-elle, je ne te dérange pas?

— C'est un peu tard pour me le demander, répliqua M. Dorval avec un sourire indulgent, en désignant ses papiers rejetés au loin, dispersés, à l'abandon.

— C'est que je voulais ne pas perdre de temps, te prévenir sans retard... pour que... Enfin, tu vas voir.

— Que signifie ce préambule?... Voyons... Explique-toi.

— Il s'agit de Françoise.

M. Dorval s'installa commodément dans son fauteuil de bureau. Il savait qu'il en aurait pour longtemps.

Les deux sœurs s'adoraient. La pauvre et chère Françoise avait élevé Mme Dorval; et celle-ci, en se mariant, n'avait pas voulu la quitter. Elle lui avait voué un culte de reconnaissance

ardente et passionnée, faite d'amour filial et d'amour fraternel, avec un profond sentiment de pitié pour son infirmité.

Car la malheureuse Françoise était infirme, difforme, bossue, avec un corps tourmenté, qui n'avait d'humain que la tête, une belle tête toute rayonnante de bonté et d'intelligence.

— Je viens, poursuivit Mme Dorval, de trouver, dans sa chambre, ma pauvre sœur toute en larmes, agitée, nerveuse, aggressive même à mon égard quand je lui ai demandé pourquoi elle pleurait.

— Et elle n'a pas voulu te répondre?

— Non. Pourtant il n'est rien arrivé de nouveau: elle n'a pas reçu de lettre, elle n'a vu personne. D'ailleurs, je connais tous ses secrets...

— Sauf celui-là?

— Précisément.

— Et tu en conclus?

— Rien, mon chéri; je ne sais quoi penser.

— Rien de plus simple, pourtant; c'est le printemps!

— Tu plaisantes!

— Pas du tout.

— Mais il ne me fait pas pleurer, moi, le printemps!

Il attira sa jeune femme dans ses bras, et, scandant ses paroles de baisers:

— Non, dit-il, parce que, toi, tu es heureuse, tu aimes, tu es aimée! Mais elle?

— Sans doute! la pauvre infirme!

— Elle a mal aux nerfs, comme vous dites parfois, mesdames. C'est-à-dire qu'elle sent vaguement qu'il lui manque quelque chose; elle perçoit le vide de son existence, la solitude de son cœur. Mais elle n'a pas voulu te le dire! Et

toi, ma chérie, malgré ta finesse naturelle, ta finesse de femme, tu n'as pas deviné, parce que les gens heureux ne devinent pas le malheur.

— Mais pourquoi se cache-t-elle de moi? Elle sait pourtant combien je l'aime!

— Oui, mais elle est jalouse de toi, jalouse de ton bonheur qu'elle voit sans pouvoir le partager.

— C'est grave, cela! dit Mme Dorval, devenue subitement pensive.

— Quelquefois.

Et, baissant le ton, comme pour atténuer le reproche indirect de ses paroles:

— Ecoute, lui dit-il... Quand tu m'as imposé comme condition expresse à notre mariage de garder toujours ta sœur avec nous...

Elle lui mit la main sur la bouche; et, pendant qu'il saisissait entre ses dents un des doigts roses:

— Je ne t'ai rien imposé! protesta-t-elle.

Il eut un sourire d'acquiescement:

— Soit! dit-il. Je retire le mot. Quand tu me l'as demandé, je ne pouvais pas te le refuser. Si même tu m'avais demandé le monde entier, j'aurais consenti de même... Que n'aurais-je pas fait d'ailleurs pour t'épouser!...

Elle lui sauta au cou avec un élan de folle tendresse... Il continua plus sérieux:

— Je t'ai tout de suite objecté qu'elle serait une gêne continue pour de jeunes époux comme nous!...

— Elle l'est bien peu pourtant!

— C'est vrai: il faut en convenir; car la malheureuse se cloître solitairement dans sa chambre. Seulement, c'est elle qui souffre. Quelques efforts que nous fassions pour nous contenir en sa présence, elle a constamment devant les yeux le spectacle d'un bonheur qu'elle ne partagera jamais, d'un sentiment qu'elle ne doit jamais connaître.

— Alors, point de remède?

— Le seul serait de la marier. Mais c'est impossible! Quel homme voudrait jamais... avec son infirmité?... D'ailleurs elle est trop intelligente

pour épouser n'importe quel coeur de dot.

La jeune femme sembla hésiter un instant, puis résolument, avec toute la vivacité de sa nature généreuse et primesautière:

— Eh bien, mon cheri, il faut nous dévouer tous les deux, il faut absolument lui donner l'illusion de l'amour.

— Comment veux-tu faire?

— Rien de plus simple, tu lui feras la cour.

Elle avait prononcé ces mots avec une inconscience si tranquille qu'il bondit de son siège, étonné, stupéfait:

— Moi? Tu veux?... Quand je t'aime! quand elle sait que je t'aime! Mais c'est une idée folle!

— Qu'elle se croie aimée de toi secrètement, et qu'elle t'aime de même...

— Mais elle s'en défendra, par scrupule, à cause de toi; et elle souffrira davantage!

— Elle ne s'en défendra pas: car elle t'aimera comme nous aimons d'abord toutes: sans le savoir... Il ne s'agit pas, d'ailleurs, de la conduire assez loin pour qu'elle ne s'ignore plus elle-même.

— N'importe! Vois donc, ma chérie, quel rôle tu me fais jouer.

— Puisque c'est pour son bien!

— Je ne pourrai jamais.

— Il le faut pourtant!

— Mais comment veux-tu?... Ici! près de toi! Chez toi! Après six mois de mariage!... C'est impossible...

Câline, elle entoura son mari de ses deux bras; et, avec une gravité moqueuse:

— Ne faites donc pas l'innocent, monsieur, qui avez su si bien vous faire aimer partout, j'en suis sûre! Comment avez-vous fait avec moi? Le plus aisément du monde: d'abord des hommages respectueux, publics, puis une certaine familiarité affectueuse et enjouée, entrecoupée de longs soupirs qui semblaient tirés du fin fond de la terre, puis une recherche obstinée des petites conversations seul à seule dans les coins. Voilà, monsieur, comment vous vous y êtes pris... Oh! j'ai vu clair dans votre jeu!

Allez!... Eh! bien, tu feras de même avec elle.

— Mais, ma chérie, tu oublies que ce n'était pas un jeu: je t'aimais, tandis que pour la pauvre Françoise...

— La pauvre Françoise! Retire son infirmité, qui gâte tout, je le reconnais, et trouve-moi une femme qui la vaille, une femme aussi bonne, aussi douce, aussi intelligente, aussi supérieure même en tous points! Comme physionomie, elle est incomparable! C'est un idéal, une tête modèle, avec ses beaux grands yeux noirs, si profonds qu'on s'y perd, le dessin si parfait des sourcils et des lèvres, la ligne pure du nez, et la splendide chevelure de jais qui l'auréole comme une sainte. Oui, conviens-en, va, sans sa difformité de corps, c'est elle qui s'appellerait aujourd'hui Madame Dorval!

Il voulut la taquiner:

— Prends garde, dit-il, je vais t'aimer.

Mais elle eut un beau mouvement de générosité:

— Eh! bien, soit, aime-la!... Aime-la... un peu, du moins. Je lui aurai fait l'aumône d'une part de ton amour: je lui dois bien cela.

Puis, après un instant, elle ajouta suppliante:

— Va, fais-le, je t'en prie, fais-le pour moi, pour m'acquitter envers elle. Recherche avec elle les endroits solitaires, les entretiens intimes où les coeurs s'ouvrent, où les âmes se fondent. Je sais que tu m'aimes: je n'ai pas peur et je ne serai point jalouse!

II

AINSI désarmé, et habilement secondé d'ailleurs par sa femme, qui trouvait mille prétextes habiles pour le laisser en tête à tête avec l'infirme, Dorval, malgré ses scrupules dut s'appliquer consciencieusement à son rôle.

Jusqu'ici, il n'avait supporté la présence de sa belle-sœur que pour ne pas déplaire à sa jeune femme, sans lui témoigner autre chose que l'amabilité toute superficielle que commandaient sa parenté et l'aménité naturelle de son caractère.

Peu à peu, en se rapprochant d'elle, il s'étonna de trouver en cette pauvre disgraciée, sous les faiblesses et les inconséquences de son sexe, un esprit ouvert, solide, profondément réfléchi, capable de comprendre ses travaux, de s'y associer dans une certaine mesure. Il en vint à la rechercher, à la consulter même en toutes choses comme une amie fidèle et sérieuse.

Tandis que sa femme était la cigale joyeuse et vive dont les chants remplissaient les heures du repos et du plaisir, Françoise était la fourmi laborieuse et patiente l'aide dévouée, l'associée qui apportait dans le travail quotidien l'appoint d'un jugement solide, affiné encore par toutes les ressources de la sagacité féminine.

Même dans le domaine des sentiments, où parfois leur conversation s'égarait, elle révélait une si charmante délicatesse, une sensibilité si pénétrante, une intuition si fine de l'amour, et même une si complète communion d'âme avec lui, qu'il se trouva peu à peu enveloppé.

Il avait pensé donner à cette pauvre âme assoiffée, la pâture frelatée d'une feinte tendresse; et c'était lui qui sans s'en douter, sans s'en apercevoir, et d'autant plus facilement qu'il s'était moins défié de lui-même, finissait par se prendre à une autre espèce d'amour que sa femme, sa chère petite femme, était incapable de lui inspirer.

Un soir, après une conversation plus tendre que de coutume, leurs lèvres se joignirent dans un furtif baiser, qui n'était déjà plus le baiser fraternel qu'ils échangeaient chaque jour.

A ce moment, brusquement, Mme Dorval entra.

Françoise, surprise de sa faiblesse, honteuse de sa trahison, incapable de feindre, n'eut pas même l'idée bien simple d'affecter une contenance innocente... et, rougissante, elle s'enfuit.

M. Dorval avait eu le temps de se ressaisir.

Souriant, mais secrètement inquiet, il attendait l'attaque de sa femme.

Celle-ci resta immobile, stupéfaite. En quelques instants, sa physionomie vive et expressive refléta tour à tour

mille passions qui l'agitèrent: à l'étonnement succéda le dépit, la jalouse, la colère, puis, après un moment de réflexion, la pitié, la confiance, l'amour le plus profond.

Alors, avec un soupir, elle se laissa tomber sur l'épaule de son mari:

— Merci, dit-elle.

Et elle éclata en sanglots.

Une confiance si touchante eût suffi à ramener un homme plus égaré, plus insensible que Dorval. Il la prit entre ses bras.

— Allons, fit-il, ne t'effraie pas, ma chérie. Tu te souviens bien que tu l'as voulu! C'est toi-même qui me l'avais commandé. Je n'ai rien fait que pour te plaire. Mais tu sais bien que je t'aime toujours, que je ne cesserai jamais de t'aimer!

Et sous l'étreinte réconfortante, sous les baisers réchauffants de son mari, la pauvre jeune femme se laissait peu à peu bercer aux douces paroles.

Elle releva la tête; et, avec un sourire au milieu de ses larmes, comme un rayon de soleil entre les nuages:

— Tu as bien fait, mon chéri, dit-elle. Mais, n'importe... j'ai eu peur!

Puis, inquiète, entourant de ses deux bras le cou de son mari, et lui plantant droit dans les yeux ses yeux suppliants:

— Nous avons fait ce que nous pouvions. Maintenant, je t'en prie, mon chéri, il faut cesser ce jeu dangereux! Je souffre trop!

Loyal, aimant, il promit.

— Mais, objecta-t-il, comment faire avec elle désormais?

Avec sa décision habituelle, la jeune femme se leva, et, délibérément:

— Je vais lui parler!

Mais il s'interposait avec inquiétude:

— Du moins, je t'en supplie, ne sois pas cruelle.

Alors elle eut un mot charmant:

— Pourquoi le serais-je, puisque je sais que tu m'aimes?

III

ELLE revint presque aussitôt et lui tendit un papier:

— J'ai trouvé cela dans sa chambre.

Il lut:

MA CHÈRE PETITE SŒUR,

Je pars en voyage... Aimez-vous et soyez heureux. Pardonnez et oubliez la pauvre FRANÇOISE.

— Vite, dit-elle, il faut la rejoindre. Elle ne peut être loin. Il faut la ramener de gré ou de force. Ma pauvre sœur doit être au désespoir. Elle ne sait pas que tout cela était entendu entre nous.

Mais il l'arrêta d'un geste; et, dans une étreinte plus franche, plus complète:

— Laisse-là, dit-il... c'est mieux ainsi!



LOVE IS A ROSE

LOVE is a rose.
The bud unfolds in sunshine and dew,
Its incense clings round the heart of you.
Love is a rose.

Love is a rose.
Its petals wither and fall away,
The incense dies—and all in a day.
Love is a rose.

LEAH DURAND.

THE WHIRLWIND

By Helen Vacaresco

IT was a cold January night. Anika thought she had never lived through more bitter weather, and she shivered under her rags, though a large fire burned on the hearth. The storm shrieked round the hut; several times the frail wooden door was burst open by the wind and the snow swept blindingly across the room. At last Anika set a huge stone against the door, and then the howling of the wind against the walls appeared more furious than before. It seemed to the solitary woman as if thousands of dying men were moaning for help with chattering teeth and clenched fists.

The light of the dazzling winter moon streamed in through the small window, where a bit of thick paper replaced the lower pane. This was the only room in the miserable hut. Its mud walls supported a straw roof, and logs of wood and heavy rushes thrown across the straw prevented this precarious shelter from being scattered to the winds by the hurricane.

But Anika looked neither anxious nor afraid; she had lived all her life on the border of the wild Moldavian plains, and was accustomed to the fury of the tempests which swept from the great Russian steppes across the Pruth. Tomorrow the storm would cease, the sun would shine. But tonight the moon glistened like a fountain; there would be a new fall of snow in the next twenty-four hours. Would her husband be back before the difficulties of the road prevented his return? If he was surprised on his way by the whirlwind, would his stalwart oxen prove strong enough to drive him through the blinding snow? Anika thought of

these things without fear, although the wolves howled at intervals with cries almost human in their intensity; she only smiled and muttered:

"No, no, my friends. You will not feast on my bones tonight, nor the bones of my husband tomorrow; so God help us!"

She crossed herself devoutly three times and continued dreaming beside the fire, heedless alike of the storm and of the wolves.

The dreams that float like mist across the brains of the uneducated and poor are unlike the reflections of the cultured and rich; their idle thoughts usually realize various details of their every day life, past, present and future. Hope and fear rarely gild or sadden their imagination; their toil-worn lives give them, as a rule, no leisure for regret, and when they do give themselves up to reflection it would probably astonish the possessor of palaces if he knew how placid and devoid of bitterness are the thoughts of the human creatures who earn their bread with so much difficulty, and how little room there is in their hearts for despair, or even comprehension of their miserable lot.

Anika's life was the hardest imaginable. She had been dismissed from her native village for having loved and married a stranger. One day, as she stood at her door, a young man passed down the road leading his oxen; he stopped and asked for a cup of water.

"From the moment I gave him to drink," said Anika, "my soul was ever athirst." He was as poor as herself and spent his time in carrying, in his wagon, barrels of petroleum from the

petroleum wells in the Carpathian mountains to the capital, or to the smaller towns of Moldavia. They married, and when they had earned enough money they built, with their own hands, the frail hut which now trembled in the midst of the snowy plains.

Ivan was always away; Anika always solitary. She spun and labored in the little garden, where they reared a few vegetables to sell at a distant market town. She walked barefoot and lightly clad. In winter she wrapped a sheepskin around her, and the veil she wore over her hair was somewhat thicker than the one she wore in the hot days of summer. They were often in want of their daily *mamaliza*—bread made with *maiza* flour—because Ivan was obliged to feed his oxen, and frequently in the long journeys the treacherous oil oozed out of the casks, and he was thus deprived of his merchandise.

Many perils surrounded him. In winter the wolves, made daring by hunger, prowled in hundreds along the highroads, and in summer the sun was so powerful that he always feared the oil might take fire. Ivan, who was superstitious, like every Roumanian peasant, had an idea that the sun did not befriend him, while the whirlwind of winter was his companion and ally. Anika remembered he had told her he was sure to get money on the night of a hurricane; the wind had himself whispered this to him one evening as he drove through one of the great leafless forests.

"Anika," he had said to her on his return, "I am certain the wind has a soul. The wind will help us out of our trouble."

Anika nodded in acquiescence, but she expected nothing; she hoped for no change in their lives. Her two little children had died some time ago; just then she had had money enough to buy the clothes in which she dressed them in their tiny coffins, and that year the celery and carrots had sold so well in the market that she was able to distribute *mamaliza* and cheese to the beggars. She felt relieved when she

remembered this. For thirty days she had carried a great pitcher of water to the roadside during the sultry weather and many a traveler had blessed the memory of the dead as he drank the refreshing draught, for, according to the tradition of the country, her darlings would be well fed and warmly dressed in the land of the departed in consequence of the holy deeds she performed on earth in their memory.

Then her thoughts reverted again to her husband.

"Ah, if Ivan would only arrive tonight or tomorrow while the moon is still clear! In twenty-four hours the snowstorm will begin. If only he could come now!"

She rose and looked out through the dim window; her eyes were dazzled by the brilliancy of the snow. The vast plain stretched out in white solemnity on all sides of the small hut; but no vapors crossed the deep azure of the sky—the spirit of the wind alone swept with rustling garments across the great spaces of heaven and earth. No sign of human life was to be seen; the dry, powdery snow was driven hither and thither by the wind; moonlight, snow and wind lingered together.

Anika gazed long and intently across the plain, then she resumed her motionless attitude by the fire; she would remain there till daybreak, and perhaps endeavor to sleep. But hark! What was that in the distance? Was it not the creaking of wheels on the ice that she heard? Now the sound had stopped—ah, she could not be mistaken. Her quick ear had instantly caught at the sound, welcome and familiar to her above all others. But why had Ivan stopped before reaching his home? Were the oxen weary—or was her husband ill? Had he fainted so near the goal, or had he been overtaken on his threshold by the wolves whose shrill lamentations had now burst forth anew? She felt numbed with terror when a low rap at the door thrilled the blood in her veins.

"Ivan!" she cried, and sprang to meet him. With frantic haste she pushed the stone away from the door,

finging it open. Then a voice that was not her husband's said:

"Woman, can you give me shelter for a few minutes? I feel frozen to death. I will not stay long."

Anika gazed at him for a moment in speechless astonishment. In the uncertain light she could see that he was a tall man; his cap was pulled over his forehead and eyes, while a fur cloak wrapped closely around him hid the lower part of his face. Who could he be? At any rate, a traveler, and he needed no other introduction to the woman, who was ever ready to do a good deed in memory of her dead children. She brought him some *mamaliza*, but he pushed the food away.

"Bring in some snow," he said hoarsely, "bring in some snow. I am afraid my fingers are frost-bitten, and I must rub them in the snow."

Anika went out and brought back a handful of snow. The stranger turned from her and plunged his fingers deep in it, muttering to himself. Then he flung it out at the door, and Anika could hear him trampling the soiled mass into the ice which lay around the hut.

She offered him a glass of brandy when he returned, but he shook his head impatiently and moved again toward the door. His haste astonished her. Why had he come in? If he did not need food and warmth he could have rubbed his hands in the snow outside. But the man spoke again in the same strange, muffled voice:

"Woman, I know your husband, and I know you are poor. Here is something for you. No, do not thank me, but think of me as one dead; pray for me as one dead; I may be dead in this cold before morning."

As he spoke he flung a heavy leather purse on the floor. To Anika's overstrained senses, wearied with long watching and fasting, the chink of the coins sounded like the mocking laughter of evil spirits. Was she mad or dreaming? She stared again at the tall figure, so vaguely, so mysteriously familiar to her. Was it a ghostly presence—the spirit of the whirlwind—in

whom her husband always firmly believed, or was it the Evil One himself, come to tempt them in their poverty with the gold?

Shivering with superstitious fear she flung herself on her knees and caught hold of the stranger's cloak as he was leaving the hut.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?" she stammered. "Shall I bless you or curse you for the gift? If the money is ill-gotten take it away, for we are honest people—honest people, I tell you."

But the man wrenched his cloak from her grasp and, with a muttered imprecation, strode out into the stormy night.

For a moment Anika remained on her knees like one stunned; then she raised herself slowly and shut the door. The bag still lay on the floor, and as she picked it up the gold pieces fell out, a shining heap in the firelight. Still as in a dream she tied them in her apron, glancing round fearfully as she did so. In her poverty and loneliness she had feared nothing; the good God had ever protected the poor. But the gold which weighed so heavily in her apron had brought with it—fear, and fear had been unknown before in the miserable hut.

They were now rich, for, without counting them, Anika guessed that the pieces of money were more numerous than the coins that the priest's wife wore as a necklace every Sunday. Ah, who was that man? Was he ghostly or human? And what would her husband say? Would he believe her story?

At daybreak she was still brooding painfully over her strange adventure, and her heart failed her when Ivan's voice and greeting called her to the door. She helped him out of the wagon in silence, and she had not uttered a word when he asked:

"Why are you so pale, little wife—what ails you? You are as cold as the ice—with not a welcome, not a word."

"Ah, Ivan, I have been so frightened—I have spent such a terrible night."

And she told him everything while

he stood shivering in the chill morning air and stamping the snow from his boots as he listened.

"Where is the money?" he said, when she had finished.

"In the cupboard," faltered Anika. "Ah, don't think me foolish, Ivan, but I feel as if the gold is cursed; ever since it came into the house I have been haunted by terrors I cannot explain."

"Nonsense, nonsense, child," said Ivan angrily; "how ungrateful you are! The man must have been kind-hearted to give you the money; he had probably made a good bargain, and God—or maybe the devil—advised him to give half of it to the poor. However that may be, it's nothing to you."

Anika shuddered.

"I cannot forget how he rubbed his hands in the snow," she whispered in an awestruck voice. "It was as if he wanted to rub something off them."

Ivan shrugged his shoulders. "It's dangerous to travel far alone in weather like this," he said. "I wonder he did not ask you for shelter. It's a miracle I got home myself. The wolves were bold with hunger and the road wellnigh impassable through the snow drifts. Many a corpse will be found in March, when the snow melts. But show me the place where the man threw out the snow with which he rubbed his hands."

Anika pointed to where the ice was black and trodden down by the tramp of heavy boots. Ivan shivered again as with ague.

"Let us go in," he muttered; "I am cold—terribly cold."

A few months later Anika and Ivan were sitting in the porch of their new home. This house was very different from the rudely built hut on the edge of the bleak Moldavian plains; its windows looked across a smiling valley, and the cheerful white houses of a small village nestled against the hill-side above.

"We must go to the orchard, dear," said Anika to her husband. "The cherries are ripe and want gathering."

He nodded assent and together they

sauntered down the path. Ivan's tall and stalwart figure was now clad in white, the usual dress of a wealthy peasant; he wore a crimson belt in which were thrust the hilts of various knives and daggers. Yet in spite of this appearance of prosperity his face wore a harassed, hungry look which Anika could not help noticing with anxiety.

A great change had taken place in their lives since the night on which the mysterious stranger had brought them the money; they were rich instead of poor, and Anika prayed fervently for his soul. She felt sure he was dead, for when the snow melted in the forest a corpse, half devoured by wolves, was found not far from their hut; and she prayed daily that he who had given them shelter, food and comfort might also be consoled in the Land of Silence. She bestowed bread, meat and honey on the poor; she placed a large pitcher of water at her door for thirsty travelers that each and all might pray for the soul in whose name these good deeds were performed.

She remembered him as she sat at her spinning-wheel or when she walked with her husband in the garden. She thought of him now, as they reached the orchard where the red fruit glistened among the leaves of the trees. Ah, how sunny and sweet was the place! And it was the stranger's gift; after all, the money had proved a blessing, not a curse, and she felt so rich, so happy and so grateful.

She leaned for an instant against her husband's arm. Ivan was shaking and shivering in the hot sunshine. Before she could ask what was the matter she heard him mutter in wild, altered tones:

"Have the trees cut down, Anika! Have the trees cut down! See, the red fruit lies like blood upon the ground—like blood, I tell you!"

He pointed with shaking fingers, as if there were indeed blood upon the ground, then turned slowly and looked at his wife with terror-stricken eyes; and as she gazed back at him a dim suspicion of the dreadful truth dawned slowly upon her mind. And in that

awful moment the sunshine seemed to fade and a dark shadow fell between them; it was the shadow of a dead man, cursing their peace and happiness.

From that day Ivan took to his bed; he lingered through the autumn, a wreck of his former self, and Anika, as she watched by his bedside, remembered sorrowfully how happy they had been in their poverty. At times the sick man lay silent, gazing with piteous eyes at Anika like some dumb animal seeking help and finding none; then he would suddenly burst out into wild, incoherent raving, which made the poor woman glance shudderingly around to see that no one was listening.

The doctors said they could do nothing for him; the soul was sick rather than the body, and Anika, with the superstition natural to the Roumanian peasant, had recourse, in her despair, to the wise women—the *tziganes* of the village. Some of them declared that Ivan's enemies had bewitched the cherry trees, and that wicked spirits haunted the orchard and had cast their spell over him. Others said he must have drunk of the well at dawn, when the fairies were abroad, and that they had enchanted him. The fruit trees were exorcised by the wise women, Ivan drank holy water—an infallible cure—but he only grew worse, although the end did not come.

"You need not cry for me yet, dear wife," he said to Anika one November morning when she was bending over him with tear-stained face. "I shall not pass away before the first snow-storm. I shall die when the wolves once more howl in the forests and gallop over the plains."

The first snowstorm of the winter was as violent as that in which the stranger had brought the money to their hut; and when the wind surged over the barren fields and the snow-flakes fell ever thicker and thicker, eddying and swirling in the stormy blast, a fierce joy and strength seized the dying man. He insisted on getting out of bed, and dressed and whistled as gaily as when he was court-

ing his wife. Anika hoped passionately that a miracle had been wrought on him and watched him in feverish anxiety. He spent all the afternoon at the window overlooking the valley; his spirits seemed to rise with the storm and he laughed with boyish glee when, as night fell, the wolves began howling.

"There they are!" he cried. "I have been waiting to hear you all the year, my children."

Anika implored him to go to bed, but he would not, and remained at the window like one entranced, while Anika watched and prayed by the fire. At last, utterly wearied out, she slept.

A knock at the door roused her with a start. Where was Ivan? Where was she? Looking wildly around and seeing no one, she ran to the door. She fell back with a shriek. The stranger—the man she thought dead—stood before her; the same cloaked figure she had seen on that stormy night long ago and often since in her dreams.

"Are you his ghost?" she gasped, wringing her hands. "Ah, why do you haunt me? I have prayed for your soul every day, and if you want the gold, take—take it, I beseech you! It has brought us nothing but evil."

"Hush, woman!" said the man; "I am not a spirit. Alas! I am still alive. Bring me snow."

Anika obeyed mechanically, dazed by the sound of that familiar voice; but when she had brought the snow she seized the lamp from the table, and, raising it above her head, threw the light on the man's face.

It was her husband.

She set the lamp again on the table and rushed toward him, flinging herself on her knees beside him.

"Ivan, Ivan!" she sobbed.

He was rubbing his fingers in the snow, groaning and muttering like a madman; but when she spoke to him he seized her and gazed at her bewildered. Then suddenly he pushed her violently from him, cowering in a heap against the wall.

"Don't touch me!" he shouted.

"There's blood on my hands—don't you see it? I murdered the man; I brought his money to you, and he has cursed me for the trick I played you. Cursed me, I say, for being poor and wanting to be rich!"

He burst into sobbing laughter, sadder than any tears.

But Anika threw her arms round his neck, pressing the wild, piteous face down on her breast.

"The Evil One sha'n't get you, beloved," she whispered passionately. "The good God is very merciful; only repent, dear one, repent!"

Ivan clung to her like a child that has at last found protection; then he faltered:

"I have been mad—but now I feel

better. . . . The wind and the snow have cooled my burning fingers. Ha! how the wolves howl! I am coming, little ones. Open the door, woman, and let them in."

He staggered to his feet, threw up his arms and reeled back against the wall—dead.

Anika caught him in her arms as he fell; and then a great, terrible cry, the cry of a woman's agony for the man she loved, echoed far into the night as she swooned across the dead body.

And the wolves howled, and the whirlwind raged round the little house till the day dawned; but the spirit of the wind bore away on its wings a tired, sinful soul, who had known crime, and also expiation, on its earthly road.



SONG

AS the joy of a flower that is filled
To the brim with dew;
As the joy of a sunset sky that is thrilled
Through and through
With the splendor of crimson and gold;
As the joy that is Youth's ere the heart grows old—
Such is my joy of you!

But the joy of the flower is brief,
For the sun drinks the dew;
The sky grows gray with grief
At the loss of its radiant hue;
And the fires of Youth turn cold;
But how can my heart, dear, ever grow old
While it has such joy of you?

CARLTON CATTNACH FOWLER.



AS USUAL

BINGHAM—Where do you keep your auto, Ryer?
RYER—In the repair shop.

A SUCCESSFUL WOMAN

By Sargent Bancroft

C LINTON was going to the dinner under protest. He disliked his hostess, for he regarded her as a lion-hunter, who, not having a large enough fortune to be conspicuous, kept herself to the fore by a judicious and never-ending supply of those present whose names were well known on the temporary rolls of the world's fame. Clinton was certain that she pursued him with invitations, repeatedly refused, just because he was an available bachelor with an independent fortune and a yacht. Without the fortune and minus the yacht, he was of the opinion that he would not have figured in her world, and, though not the type of man who expects to be loved for himself alone, Clinton was human enough to wish to have an individuality apart from his bank account.

The only reason that he had accepted Mrs. Greene's invitation for tonight was that town was dull in summer and he did not care to be alone. It was to be quite informal, only six, she had telephoned him. She met him on the threshold of the linen-swathed library with outstretched hand and a vivacity of manner that was part of her attraction.

"So glad to have got you for tonight. I've been a devoted wife and stayed with Mr. Greene this summer, but I'm off tomorrow, and I thought I'd leave him with an impression of how delightful a wife can make home and dinner by having charming people. And I want you especially to meet Miss Craig, if you have not already met her."

Her voice ended with an interrogation that Clinton felt bound to an-

swer, though, as a rule, her talk rippled on without waiting for response.

"No," he said, "I'm afraid I don't even know whom you mean."

"No? Really? How delightful!" She moved across the room to a small sofa as she talked, and Clinton followed. "Why, she is a genius. Writes, you recollect. She has done those clever magazine articles on life, and wrote 'The Price of Woman.'"

The man nodded. "I believe I do remember. Advanced sort of stuff, isn't it? Haven't read it myself; never do, you know."

Mrs. Greene laughed indulgently.

"Miss Craig won't mind. She says that some time she is going to write an essay on the foolishness of people who read books just because they know the author. She isn't advanced herself. She's delightful, and a bachelor girl; lives alone, but goes everywhere, and is tremendously well connected. You'll like her immensely. I've arranged that she is to sit next you at dinner."

Clinton held up his hands.

"I implore you, don't put me beside an author! I can't read words of more than one syllable, and I shall be tongue-tied the entire time. Please let me go home, or put me beside the other woman."

"Here she is now," Mrs. Greene answered, going across the room.

The girl she greeted was not Miss Craig, Clinton thought. She was thirty, perhaps a year more, he decided in a moment before Mrs. Greene turned to him again. She carried herself with perfect poise, and there was nothing of the bluestocking. She had far more the effect of a woman whose chief

end in life is harmony, sartorial and mental.

Mrs. Greene called him to join them.

"Mr. Clinton, I want you to meet Miss Craig. I am fortunate to get you both the same night. I want you to know each other."

She moved away to greet the other woman who was entering, and Clinton's lids drooped a little as they did when he was forming an opinion deliberately.

"Have you a forgiving disposition?" he asked slowly.

"That depends. I can forgive no end of sins in others when they do not affect me."

"This is not a sin, but it affects you. Perhaps, though, it doesn't," he murmured.

"You sound involved."

"Well, I came here tonight supposing I was going to meet a useless and dull sort of people like myself. Instead I find I am to sit next to a literary light, and I know absolutely nothing of what she has written, except that it has made people talk. Shall you put poison in my food, or condone an offense too deep to be properly punished?"

A sudden expression of interest lighted Miss Craig's rather immobile face.

"You really haven't read anything?" she asked eagerly.

"Not a line."

"And you won't ask me questions as to my 'views,' nor expect me to talk about them?"

"I shall be only too grateful to you for ignoring my ignorance."

"Fate is very good to me," the woman said, with a little laugh that Clinton thought sounded hard, and that puzzled him. "I am given into the keeping of a man for a whole dinner who will not expect me to be as a lion!"

"I am fearfully afraid of lions," Clinton confided to her. "I've never got over it since I was a child. If you were to roar I should want to run and hide."

"Will you never tell, if I tell you something?" the woman asked swiftly, leaning forward so that he caught a

fragrance of the sachet that came from the white dinner gown she was wearing.

"Please."

Her eyes crinkled with laughter and there was a suppressed smile about her lips.

"I cannot roar the least bit! I haven't the faintest idea how. Every time I'm expected to I am so afraid I shall be discovered!"

"You?" His voice expressed amazement.

"Yea, lord, even I. Don't tell, though."

The fragrance of her laces was in the air, and Clinton leaned forward suddenly.

"Why do you pretend?" he asked boldly.

The announcement of dinner prevented her from answering.

After that Clinton began to see Miss Craig a great deal. She had not asked him to call, nor would she answer the question that he repeated at dinner as to why she pretended, but when her carriage was announced he put her into it, and then begged that she would let him go as far as her home.

"You really ought not to go alone," he assured her solicitously.

"Oh, that," she shrugged her shoulders. "You forget that a woman like myself is not expected to conform entirely. Get in by all means. I pass your club and can drop you there."

"I refuse to be dropped," he had declared, seating himself. "I am going to see you to your own door."

It was as he was saying good night that he asked whether he might not come to see her.

"If you like," she told him carelessly. "This is scarcely a season of the year to pay visits. Better wait until autumn when I send out cards."

"But I may come before?" he persisted.

"Assuredly, if you have courage to brave summer heat. I leave town only for the week-ends. Good night."

That had been three weeks ago, and the summer was drawing to a close.

In that time Clinton had seen her half a dozen times, and he had made more efforts. Yet she rarely seemed to be at home, and when he found her for the first time it was with a feeling of elation. Before leaving he had asked her to dine, but she had refused.

"I never go without another woman, and the last one I know has gone for the rest of the season."

"But, surely, that need not prevent your going with me?"

"But it does. Silly? Oh, yes, I am over seven, and you are a gentleman, but I do not dine *à deux*."

"Yet you are independent, you live alone," the man urged.

"The more reason for conforming in the little things, as I cannot in the large. I am sorry, but it is useless."

Clinton was puzzled. His idea of a woman who did things, who had any marked mental development, was that she necessarily lost some femininity. Yet he had never seen one more thoroughly of the feminine sex than this. She had given him an impression in some ways of a sleek tiger which loved to be stroked yet which was capable of springing suddenly with a tremendous force and deadliness of aim that almost made him wish to see it materialize. Her apartment was small but most artistic, and her gowns were soft and frilly. Clinton had an idea that when alone she must wear only soft, clinging, lacy things; that was the effect she had. She moved leisurely, yet there was always an undercurrent of force, and though she did not try to get into discussions—indeed, avoided them—she had once or twice uttered an opinion or a statement with a quickness and sureness of delivery that was like a practiced sharpshooter firing at a target. Then she retreated to a cover he could not penetrate, leaving him baffled and wondering more than ever.

Though she would not dine with him, the unexpected arrival in town for a couple of days of a married cousin and her husband had furnished a chaperon, and Clinton had made up a party of four to spend Sunday on his yacht. Miss Craig stood

near the companion when he went on board off the Battery Saturday noon after leaving Wall street, and he was struck anew by the sureness of her poise, mental and physical, as she swayed slightly, keeping a perfect balance while the yacht swung in the cross seas made by passing boats.

The rest of that day and Sunday he found her fascinating. The complex and incomprehensible quality he could not solve deserted her. She became a charming woman with no hidden undercurrents, but rather filled with a spontaneity and vivacity that showed her in a new light. It recalled anew the sudden abandon with which she had told him at Mrs. Greene's that she only pretended to roar. It would have been impossible to regard the woman on the yacht as a lion or anything but a gracious, confiding creature who was saturated with the joy of living.

"It is the sea," she said exultantly, as they stood together watching the wake as the yacht plowed along. "The color and space and rush of the water! It makes one over. Everything else vanishes."

She thrust out her hands as though sweeping away unseen realities.

Again during the season Clinton asked Miss Craig to go off for Sunday, but not caring for the people who made up the party she declined. Several times when he called she was not at home, and he finally found himself wondering whether she were avoiding him. At the same time he found that she had taken more of a hold upon his imagination than any other woman since the calf age; she piqued, puzzled and interested him, and for the first time he began seriously to contemplate matrimony. The man had passed the age where he found himself suddenly in love, but he was approaching the condition where he found one woman satisfying, and he recognized it rather with astonishment that concluded with a determination to marry Miss Craig if it were possible. There were crevices in his life that a woman could fill.

The first time he saw her after a lapse of several weeks she received him cordially, yet with an impersonality that surrounded her always except at rare intervals. Clinton did not like it. The aloofness nettled, and more than that, it hurt him. He wanted her different.

It was a chill evening of early autumn and a wood fire was sputtering on the hearth as Clinton seated himself wearily.

"You discourage me," he said abruptly. "I just think I am getting at the real you when I find myself farther away than ever. Is it my fault?"

"It is my misfortune. I am cursed with a lack of the clinging-vine element wherewith to wind my personality about yours."

"Oh, no, you don't lack the elemental instinct to cling," Clinton contradicted. "I'm not much given to analysis, but I know that. I have seen flashes of it now and then. It was so on the yacht. You were a natural, normal woman," he persisted.

"Dear me, how stupid! What are the symptoms?" Miss Craig inquired, lighting a cigarette before she pushed the stand toward Clinton.

"It wasn't stupid. It was dear; it made me see that you could be a woman, and then suddenly you meet me as though you did not care a straw whether or not you ever saw me again."

"Oh, but I do," his hostess assured him equably.

"You are going to do more than that," Clinton told her swiftly, moved from his usual calm by her indifference. "You are going to care about me—to love me, even you!"

The woman paused with her cigarette halfway to her lips.

"Really? To what end?" she inquired.

"Marriage," he told her doggedly.

She gave a little mirthless laugh, and resumed smoking.

"How ponderous! Marriage? Not for me, I think."

"Not now, but later you will change

your mind. I know I don't amount to very much, and you are brilliant and write, and all that, but I do care, and I'll look after you. Mrs. Greene said you had no income except what you earn. I'm not being impertinent," he broke off quickly, "but it is not right. I've money enough for us both to live on reasonably well, and no woman ought to work, least of all one delicately born and bred as you were."

Miss Craig's voice was gentler than Clinton had ever heard it before when next she spoke.

"Would you have me marry you for your money?" she asked.

"No, I wouldn't. I want you to care, too. Not madly—I'm not the type of chap women like you would go crazy over—but I am going to make you care enough to marry me."

Miss Craig leaned over and laid her hand on his arm. All the aloofness Clinton had complained of was gone. She was a woman to her finger-tips, alluring, gracious, with a subtle fascination.

"Perhaps I do now," she told him softly.

The man caught her hand in his and held it fiercely. Her face was close to his, and from her hair floated the same delicate odor he had noticed about her laces, and her eyes were dark with things unutterable. But as he tried to take her in his arms she drew away. "Don't," she said quickly. "Don't touch me." Her voice was almost appealing. "Forgive me—help me. I do not love you. Not that way, if at all."

Clinton looked at her, dazed. "Then why did you let me think so?" he demanded fiercely.

"I thought perhaps I did. I wanted to know—I wanted to be as other women. You said just now that I was sometimes."

"But not then. There never was another in the world as you were then. Oh, my dear, love me, marry me! Or don't marry me—just take me anyway!" There was no sarcasm nor humor in his tones. "I don't know about women like you. You hear that

some don't want to marry nowadays. But I love you, I didn't know myself what it meant until just now. But you've got to," he went on doggedly. "I know I'm stupid and you are clever——"

"In heaven's name, hush!" Miss Craig had thrown down her cigarette, and jumping up swept across the room, the long, soft gown she wore trailing after her without a sound. "What difference do you suppose that would make if it were true? And it is not. You are not stupid, and my cleverness, that I admit, is the result of self-preservation—the instinct that makes a man crafty and shrewd in the face of danger. I face danger every day of my life that I battle for a living. Any woman does who competes with men, among them. Unless she is careful the sex element becomes uncontrollable; and, since man dominates the world, woman is bound to go under unless she avoids the issue. I have avoided it; the men I have worked with scarcely regard me as a woman; not one has ever been in love with me; I have failed to appeal at all. Other men have been appealed to—oh, yes. I could write a book on men who have loved me. Some of them were good, others were not, but it made no difference, for I cared for none, and do you know why?"

Clinton shook his head. She had stopped before him, and he was gazing, fascinated, at this breaking down of all reserve she had hitherto guarded.

"Because what you call my cleverness has numbed the woman element in me. I can pretend, as I did just now, but I am only a thing—a lion to those who do not know the difference between a bray and a roar. I see my ideas adopted and developed in my line of work, and myself in demand because of them, but what good do they do me? More money? Yes, but it does not make enough for a life of leisure as I would have it. It means still working when I am ill; going out in rain and snow when I should be housed. You said no woman should work. It is true. None is so constructed as to do it, day in and day out.

It is a cruelty of the age that women have been forced into competition with men—to fight them on the same ground. I know that. I feel it so that I tried to make myself accept you if you asked me to marry you, but I cannot marry for a home. I am not the type who can buy creature comforts that way.

"And behold me, miserable, wretched; a 'successful woman' they call me. When they get up symposiums on various lines with women conspicuous in 'the public eye,' as the magazines put it, they come to me. They want my opinion on 'the uplift of the educational movement among the immigrants,' or something else equally foreign, and publish my sayings with my photograph, when what I pray for and want is to be only just a woman with my home and husband and babies.

"That startles you," the woman went on in a torrent of words. "That isn't a proper thing for an unmarried woman to say, but I am showing you what a real woman is. There is no failure in the world so great as the 'successful' woman if she is normally constructed. She wants love, devotion; she wants the protection a man can give her, and the joy of living her life in his. Her own life made for herself is a mockery more bitter than Dead Sea fruit. It tortures.

"You come here to see me and say what a charming home I have. I have no home—merely a place. I am a machine that grinds out copy by the page at so much a word, or entertainment for my friends!"

The scorn in her voice was a revelation to Clinton, and he stood over the chair in which she had sunk, and patted her shoulder fearfully.

"Don't," he said. "It isn't so!"

"Let me go on now," she begged. "I have never spoken before; I am not likely to do so again. You recollect the night we met I told you I only pretended to be a lion? You wanted to know why I said so. It was because it was so refreshing to meet a man who took me as a woman, not as a well-

known person. I wanted you to keep thinking of me as a woman. I told you just now that I hadn't the elemental feminine instinct to cling, but I have, and I want to be loved. It is human; all women want it. But I can love none of these men who love me, and it is what the world calls my 'success' that constitutes my failure. The qualities, the aloofness you have spoken of, and the impersonality, are a result of my work. Because of them I have succeeded, and with success has come their greater development. I would like to 'cling' but I cannot. The capacity has been killed. My life as a woman to love a man is over—trained out of me by my very success. Success!" she repeated scornfully. "It is the very wormwood of life; it is a curse. It is the bitterest punishment God ever invented to teach woman that her proper role is being a woman, and not half man!"

"You would be different," Clinton urged.

But the woman shook her head wearily.

"No, I have tried. I tried even with you as I have with others. Passion in me is strangled even before its birth, and a woman without passion is a fruit without flavor."

Clinton gazed at her helplessly.

"I do not understand. You want

love, it is offered to you, and you refuse it."

"Yes, that is it, and you cannot understand. No man could. But when you hear talk of a successful woman again look below the surface and see whether it is not failure, failure like mine. A successful woman is not even a stuffed doll; she is made in the likeness of woman, but her works are clogged by the machinery of success, and the jealousies and joys, thrills and delights of real women are denied her. She is thirsting always for a drink that turns dry when she touches it. That is the price she pays."

The man rose to go.

"If I were twenty-five instead of forty, I should be saying very reckless things," he told her slowly. "I am going."

She held out her hand.

"Some time when you have ceased to regard me as a human woman and understand that I am merely a successful one, perhaps we shall meet again. Keep away from my kind. The curse of the liberty of our time is on them. They are for 'careers,' not for homes or men. Good-bye."

He held her hand a moment without speaking, and then closed the door behind him. The woman, alone, leaned against a high-backed chair, and buried her tearless eyes in her hands.



RONDEL TO THE MOON

HAIL, patient Moon! Matchmaker of the spheres!
The lover's confidante for that old tune
Yet to the same old words, these thousand years!
Hail, patient Moon!

You veil your face with tact most opportune
And wink at kisses—even turn deaf ears
When lovers all *too* fulsome nonsense croon!

A perfect chaperon, who never jeers
At vows which would be madness at high noon,
And beams benignantly on foolish tears!—
Hail, patient Moon!

ELISABETH R. FINLEY.

OUR LADY OF CLEVERNESS

By Minna Thomas Antrim

HOLDING her finger upon the pulse of the world, the Woman of Cleverness governs her life by its heart-beats.

A clever man hides half he does not know. A clever woman hides half she does know, therein doubling her strength.

The women of history have been women of mystery; therefore, a clever woman mystifies.

The life of a clever woman is a perpetual secret. Beyond the vestibule of her mind, none may venture.

Intimacies are tabooed by her. Aloofness, untinged by hauteur, is her métier. She argues, reasonably, that the career of individuals must be jeopardized, or retarded by intimates.

Ever, though covertly, are her eyes regarding the circlings of Opportunity.

Haste has no part in her. She is enviably serene, habitually tactful, gaining thereby, as tribute, all that stupid women lose through tears.

Extraordinarily gifted, *sans doute*, she is; yet by no self-conducted tomtom is it heralded.

Her wisdom is finely tempered by wit, and when she is most witty, she is weirdly wise.

She knows—none better—that by Ambition fell the angels. Although wingless, she intends to rise by it.

Obstacles are regarded *sans tremor*, they but add piquancy to her itinerary.

Rarely is she rich. Often her talents must clothe and sustain her. To Ambition she offers up hourly sacrifice.

To fast for a month, in order to look like a Parisienne for a night, is dolorous, but falters not our Lady.

At thirty, she has reached the second threshold of Destiny, and ever outward and upward she is looking.

Her social standing vibrates a little. This is fatal, unremedied. She determines to make her standing-place secure.

Shod in resolve, and girded with hope, she starts.

Her beginnings are instructive. Initially, she creates a Personality, and never for one moment fails to live up to it. To be denominated "original," she is aware, is to focus attention. She goes constantly masked, incog-nita toning perfectly with her role. Where she goes, Attention follows.

Wiser than the butterfly sisterhood, she cultivates women.

In women, not princes, she puts her trust; perfectly realizing that always it has been women who made Society, princes oftentimes who marred it.

The three deadly vices of woman, gush, gossip and gluttony, she eschews, nor is she enamoured of primness therefore all women do not esteem her.

Prudery and Prejudice, twin daughters of Malice, make the Clever Woman mourn. Hobbies she has, but keeps them perfectly groomed and tightly reined, lest they overrun the great god—Opinion.

No petty jealousies disturb her; therein lies her greatest singularity.

In man, she prefers the manners of a courtier to the morals of a saint;

for courtesy is the scale upon which woman weighs man. Man's morals concern himself, his manners affect woman.

Searchlights are her eyes, whose deep vision fathoms man's soul. From them flees the wicked man, as a hare from the gunner.

Concerning the New Woman, she is deeply and darkly silent. Prates she never of equality, nor would she vote if paid personally, preferring woman's privileges to woman's rights. But, be it understood, she does not publish her choice.

A mortal, she has, therefore, emotions, even sentiments, but laughs at sentimentality. She thinks Love a tricky little fellow, with an insufficient wardrobe, whose antics she is up to, and never permits him to throw dust into her eyes.

Being exquisitely feminine, she prefers being loved well, rather than too wisely, but sacrifices her preference. History tells us that women of her sort have loved like demons, but rarely like fools.

At thirty, and thereafter, her heart is submissive to reason, for she has given Intellect charge concerning it.

It is not often that she is beautiful. What has beauty to do with cleverness, or cleverness to do with beauty? But she has charm; she fascinates; she attracts; she inspires.

Knowing that men admire a limited perspicacity in women, she often essays the role of pupil. Oracular she never is.

Young men she treats with reserve; old men with flattering distinction, being aware that hell hath no fury like an old beau scorned.

By thirty-five she is married. Generally, her lord antedates her in age by a score of years. Always, he has money. Notwithstanding, he is very respectable, and—she respects him, which is unique.

In her spending, she also demonstrates an originality that amazes the Mammonites. Her home is not a-glitter. It expresses her; it is like no other.

Continually she is utilizing the gifts the gods have bestowed, and, by their aid, is enabled to tie the strengthening strands of merit to the chariot of Opportunity, and is carried steadily forward. Obviously, having no intimates, she has no enemies.

She prudently reserves herself. She is not over-quick to respond to overtures.

Her personality each year clothes itself anew in a fresher and more modish mantle, and her progress is marked.

She meets many, but never "knows" any woman until they have dined —antiphonally. She "remembers" no Great Personage before she has been recognized. "Pushing" has no part in her role.

Skilfully, with fine nerve and tireless caution unswerved by others, she plays her Big Game of Destiny.

At forty, she is known by and knows a few "proper" people. She meets *grandes dames* casually, as peer meets peer. She is to the manner bred if not to the manor born. Her air is perfect; her bearing fine. When dining out, she errs never in being wittier than her witty hostess, nor wiser than her learned host. When entertaining guests, she is the synonym of Ease.

Her tact at all times is faultless. It wins favor wherever she is found. Society often laughs with her, never does she permit it to smile at her; wherein lies the gospel of Attraction.

She shines, but does not dazzle, talks well, but never too long.

At forty-five, she is *persona grata* at the Court of the Smart. She is of the moderns most modern, and yet—distinctive.

Years pass. She still keeps her finger upon the Great Pulse. Her judgment ripens, her humor increases, her sympathy broadens, for she finds Life as lived by the Worldlings a tragic comedy. Nevertheless, she has few illusions, and is never without her *grano salis*, which she uses unnoted.

At fifty, she is noted by the Great

Censors. They approve of her. She appeals to them by never appealing. Her reserve doubles theirs. Moreover, they tell one another she has never decorated the Social edge, nor sat insolently isolated and obviously forlorn, in an opera-box, tiaraed

and loaded with Hebraic splendor; that she is plainly unrelated to the "Climbers." Whereupon, the Inner Circle opens wide the doors, that this Queen of Tact may enter in. Her welcome is sincere. She has "arrived." Her standing-place is quite secure.



A PERFECT DISGUISE

HAVING fully recovered from an illness, Satan threw from him, contemptuously, his saintly habit.

"What rot!" said he. "No longer a saint I'll be!"

"Did your majesty call?" asked an imp, a-tremble.

"Yes; I am going out within the hour. Get me my best disguise. Make haste!"

In a moment the imp returned with the costume.

"Very good," chuckled Satan; "a perfect disguise!"

A moment later he had donned a gentleman's evening clothes.



ANNUAL PROCEEDING

FIRST TOADSTOOL—So your brother was the victim of mistaken identity?

SECOND TOADSTOOL—Yes, poor fellow; somebody ate him for a mushroom.



DESCRIPTIVE

THE CHAPERON—Well, now that you have met the new poet, how do you like him?

THE DEBUTANTE (*with a shiver*)—Oh, please don't ask me. I don't know how he makes me feel!

"Well, my dear, I am very glad you feel so, for I think he is just that sort of man."

A DESERT NIGHT

LET us stray a little, you and I,
Under the vast immensity
That is dome to Allah's mosque, the sky!

The myriad stars seem to sway and swing
Like cressets, ring upon radiant ring,
Now glowing and now vanishing.

Silence girdles us, save for the bark
Of jackals haunting the outer dark
Where a Bedouin's camp-fire shows its spark.

Yonder sleep in the shielding khan
That shelters our way-worn caravan—
Horse and camel and woman and man.

They are happy with trance and dream,
And we with waking, and that one theme
That lovers will love till the sun's last gleam

Azrael and Israfel,
All the genii of heaven and hell,
What are they when love's tale's to tell?

Naught!—for the world-old night-wind saith
Out of the void, with its lute-like breath,
Love is lord over Time and Death!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



NONE TO PAY

BRIGGS—Is living in the country more economical?
WIGGS—Yes; you save the servants' wages.



HIS WHEREABOUTS

“**I** SUPPOSE Bowen spends most of his time in his automobile?”
“No; under it.”

A PASS TO PARADISE

By Elliott Flower

THE way the conductor looked at me and then at the pass made me uncomfortable. I never was good at dissembling, and the pass was not in my name.

"Now, that's the way to do," he said as he took a seat beside me in the smoking-compartment of the sleeping-car and began to count up his tickets.

"What's the way to do?" I asked, bewildered.

"Why, give a woman her own ticket or pass and let her look after it," he explained.

"Certainly," I said. "Why not?"

"I don't know why not," he replied, "but it isn't often done. If a woman is traveling with a man, he usually takes charge of everything. Then he goes for a smoke, as you have done, and his wife has no ticket when I come along. 'My husband has it,' she says, and that's something for me to keep in mind until I locate the husband. When there are several such cases in a single car it is sometimes difficult to get the thing untangled. But your wife had her own pass."

I had no wife, but this did not seem to be a suitable time to admit it. Carl Watson, on whose pass I was traveling, had a wife, but I certainly had not understood that a wife went with the pass. Carl had only recently attained to the dignity and luxury of an annual pass. Before that he had been a fare-paying plebeian like myself. Just what his service to the road had been I do not know, but he had suddenly come into the possession of an annual pass for which he had practically no use. He told me about it when I mentioned my proposed trip.

"Take my pass," he said promptly. "I've got to get something out of that road some way, and so far I haven't a thing but passes that I can't use without making a special and unnecessary trip for that purpose. It will be a satisfaction to know that you're getting a little good out of it."

I had the common weakness of being ever ready to get the better of a railroad when opportunity offered, and Watson's offer of his pass showed that he was afflicted the same way. Then, too, it seemed to me that it would be a friendly act to help Watson to collect whatever rides were due from the road. Otherwise, for such service as he had rendered, the road would be repaying him with nothing but a piece of pasteboard. That was the way I reasoned when he offered me the pass. I recalled now, however, that he had said "passes" when speaking of what he had received from the road, so the unexpected presence of a "wife" was partially explained. It might be Mrs. Watson, finding an unexpected use for her pass, or it might be—

"Heavens!" I thought when I reached this point. "Suppose I don't know my wife! It would be awkward enough with Mrs. Watson, but she would understand the circumstances, and she's clever and resourceful. To have an unknown wife, however—"

I noticed that the conductor was looking at me curiously, and I thought I detected a humorous twinkle in his eyes. He had counted his tickets, put them away carefully, and was preparing to move on.

"Perhaps," he suggested, "you have unusual confidence in your wife. Some

women put their tickets away so carefully that it takes an hour to find them."

"Oh, my wife is exceptionally careful and methodical," I hastened to explain. "That's why I trust her."

"Married long?" he asked carelessly.

"Why, yes—that is, not so very long. A year or so."

"That's not long," said the conductor. "She looked so lonely as I came through that I thought perhaps you were a bridal couple. It's usually only the bride who looks lonely when her husband leaves her for a half-hour's smoke."

The conductor left and I began to speculate as to my wife. Who was she? It is extremely awkward to be in doubt as to the identity of your wife. What should I do with her? It is fully as awkward to be in doubt as to what disposition to make of your wife. What should I say to her when we met? It is really distressing not to know what kind of a greeting your wife expects. What would she say to me? It is harrowing to be uncertain as to the welcome you receive from an unknown wife.

I felt that it would be gratifying to get a glimpse of my wife, but I dared not risk it. If I failed to recognize her, it would be more than awkward. People are so suspicious in this world that a man's inability to recognize his wife would be sure to create disagreeable comment, and I did not even know what section she was occupying. Of course, she might prove to be the real Watson's wife, in which case I would know her at once; but she might not. Mrs. Watson might be as generous with her pass as her husband was with his. In that case, was my wife good-looking? If I had been consulted in the matter, I certainly would have preferred a pretty wife to a plain one, but another had made the selection. I rather resented this. A fellow likes to be given a little choice in the matter of a wife, and I had a decided preference. If it had been left to me I certainly would have had Madge Colfax traveling on my wife's pass.

The porter appeared and it seemed to me that there might be a chance to get some needed information.

"Is my wife entirely comfortable?" I inquired.

"Which is yo' wife?" asked the porter.

"How do you suppose I know?" I retorted irritably.

The porter seemed to be so much astonished at this that I thought it wise to make an explanation.

"I mean," I said, "that I failed to notice the number of the section, and I could hardly expect you to identify her by her pass, as the conductor did."

"The lady with the pass!" exclaimed the porter. "Oh, she's all right, sah. Saw her show it to the conductah. Lower seven."

Something gained, anyhow. I now knew in what section to find my wife, but I was in no hurry to look for her. She might not recognize me, and it certainly would be difficult to explain to a strange woman that I was her husband.

So far I had had the smoking-compartment to myself, but now another passenger invaded it, and presently we were conversing.

"Have you noticed the lady who has lower seven?" I asked.

"Well, rather," he replied. "She's a stunner, isn't she?"

"I hope so," I said, for a fellow can't help hoping that his wife is good-looking. Then I feared that I had made a mistake, so I hastened to add, "I mean, I'm glad to think so."

"Know her?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes," I returned carelessly; "I guess I do."

"Thunder and guns!" he exclaimed, "don't you know? I wouldn't give much for a man who could forget such a girl as that."

"You misunderstand me," I explained. "A man never knows when he really knows a woman. Why, I've known men who really didn't know their own wives. Woman is a perpetual surprise."

Just then the porter reappeared.

"Yo' wife says she's all right, sah," he told me.

"D-d-did you say I was asking for her?" For a moment I could not conceal my agitation.

"Yes, sah."

"What did she say?"

"Well, sah," said the porter apologetically, "f'r a fac', she acted like she was s'prised to find you was on the train, or else she ain't used to bein' married. She got mighty red, sah, an' then she said to tell you she was com'f'table. Guess yo' ain't married long, sah."

"Not long enough to be used to it," I answered truthfully.

My smoking-room companion looked surprised and puzzled, but I was too busy with my thoughts to give any further attention to him. I had made additional progress. My wife now knew that she was my wife—or at least the wife of someone. Consequently, she would not be unprepared when we met. That was a point gained. I had also discovered that she was decidedly attractive. That put the real Mrs. Watson out of the question. Mrs. Watson was far from plain, but she was not the kind of a woman who would be described as "a stunner" by the passing stranger. Moreover, my companion had referred to the occupant of lower seven as a "girl," and the real Mrs. Watson was rather matronly.

"Which is your wife?" asked the smoker opposite at this point in my meditations.

"Lower seven!" I replied.

"Say! but you're lucky!" he exclaimed.

"Think so?" I asked. "Well, suppose you just tell her you're Carl Watson, and see what kind of a frost you'll get."

"Oh, I don't want to mix up in any family rows," he returned. "Besides, it would be absurd. I'm not her husband."

"But she doesn't know it," I said.

My remarks seemed to make him nervous and he moved to a place where he could make a quick jump for the

door. He may have thought I was mentally irresponsible. And, for the moment, I was.

"You're a most extraordinary man," he remarked at last. "Why, a few minutes ago you seemed uncertain as to whether you knew your own wife."

"I was," I admitted.

"And now?"

"Well, I'm not quite sure," I replied. "I'd like to see a photograph of her. I hope I would recognize it."

He looked at me doubtfully, and when the sleeping-car conductor came in I was alone again. However, I had had time to collect my thoughts, so I spoke more intelligently.

"There is my berth ticket—lower five," I told him. "My wife has her own ticket—lower seven."

"In separate sections," he commented. "Couldn't you get one complete section?"

"We prefer two lower berths," I returned, with dignity. "Is there a law against it?"

"Certainly not," he hastened to say. "It only struck me as unusual, for a section is generally considered preferable to two lower berths with strangers overhead."

"I believe," I remarked, "that it is our privilege to have our own ideas of comfort."

"Of course," he acquiesced, and dropped the subject.

I was beginning to realize that the meeting between my wife and myself could not be delayed much longer when the train conductor came through again. Now, I don't know what the train conductor thought, but there was the same humorous twinkle in his eyes and he seemed to be unusually interested in my affairs. He may have divined something of my embarrassing predicament.

"The train," he said to me, "is pretty crowded and I would suggest that you tell your wife to be ready to go to the dining-car at the first call. Otherwise, you may have a long wait."

"Thank you," I said.

Now the time had come to meet my wife, and I braced myself for the or-

deal. The porter had been kind enough to inform her that she had a husband on the train, but would she know me when I came up the aisle? I could identify her by the section in which she sat, but she had no such means of identifying me, and there ought to be at least the light of recognition in the eyes of a wife when she meets her husband. Of course, it might be that we were acquainted before we were thus ruthlessly mated, but the chances were against it. Watson and I were excellent friends, but I knew very few of Mrs. Watson's feminine friends. Still—well, I had to go.

I was very miserable as I walked up the aisle, but I tried not to show it. I saw the train conductor watching me closely, and the porter and my former smoking-room companion were likewise interested. Then I saw the girl in lower seven, and I forgot the others. She was *the girl*; she was Madge Colfax; and Madge Colfax, in addition to being my ideal, was not a girl to let her wits go astray.

Madge saw me coming, smiled, and made room for me beside her.

"I thought you would never come back, dear," she said. "I'm afraid you're smoking too much."

Talk about actresses! Madge put just the right inflection on what she said. There was no embarrassment about her "dear," and there was no unnecessary stress put upon it. The word seemed to be used unconsciously, as any affectionate wife might use it. And it put all doubts at rest. I saw my smoking-room companion scratch his head in a puzzled way; I saw the conductor's bewildered look, and the porter's evident surprise.

"Perhaps I have been smoking too much," I admitted, as I took the seat beside her, "but I'll gladly promise to spend the rest of the time with you."

There was no time for explanations before the dining-car call came, and there was no chance for confidential conversation there. The best that we could do was so to conduct ourselves

that we would cease to be objects of interest to our fellow-passengers, and this we did. Then, when we returned to the Pullman, we were able to discuss our predicament.

"It is horrible," said Madge.

"It is delightful," said I.

"When the porter mentioned my husband I thought I would die of mortification," she persisted.

"Is it so mortifying to have a husband?" I asked.

"You know what I mean," she asserted. "It's mortifying to have one when you haven't one. But what could I do? If I didn't own up to the husband they would have put me off the train and taken up Jennie's pass. I had to do it. But what's to be done now?"

"Why, there may be a minister on the train," I suggested.

"Don't be absurd," she exclaimed irritably.

"I'm not absurd," I retorted. "I'm downright sensible. If you hadn't been so perverse as to say 'Perhaps' instead of 'Yes,' we might be traveling——"

"It takes six months," she said sagely, "for a man to find out whether he's really in love after he first thinks he is. I wanted you to be sure."

"I'm sure," I insisted, "and I saw a clerical-looking man——"

"You're insufferable," she broke in. "Do you think I'd be married on a railroad train?"

"There's an intimation there," I said triumphantly, "that you would be willing elsewhere. Now, if you're sure and I'm sure——"

"I didn't say I was sure," she asserted. "I wish you would talk sense. This is a serious matter. I shall never forgive Jennie for putting me in such a frightful position."

"I'm sure she's not to blame," I argued. "She didn't know I had Carl's pass."

"Pass!" she exclaimed scornfully. "I always thought a pass was such a luxury, and—and—it's only a pass to trouble."

"It might be a pass to paradise," I

intimated. "There's a wait of twenty minutes at the next station, and in that time——"

"Won't you please be sensible?" she asked wearily.

"It's difficult to be sensible with one who won't listen to reason," I retorted.

"Think of my predicament," she persisted. "Suppose someone should hear of this."

"Precisely," I returned. "I've been urging that we prepare ourselves for just such a contingency."

"I'll never, never, never, travel on a pass again—unless it's my own," she said plaintively. "Oh, why did I ever try to beat the railroad company! I shall never speak to Jennie again. She suggested this deception herself. I never would have thought of it."

"Oh, well," I returned, offended at the way she ignored my solution of the problem, "I'll leave the train at the next station and that will end the trouble."

"If you do," she said, "I'll never speak to you again. It would get into the papers sure. Just think of it! 'Mysterious disappearance from a train,' or 'A wife deserted'! They'd have the name Carl Watson, too, and that would make trouble for him when the reporters went to ask about him. The whole story would come out, and how could we explain it?"

"Why don't you suggest something yourself, instead of merely vetoing all my suggestions?" I demanded. "Why should you lose your head now, when you were so very cool and collected at the beginning? If you could accept a husband unexpectedly from the porter, I don't see why you should be so perturbed now. Perhaps you're disappointed in the husband dealt out to you in this unusual way."

"Tom," she said, and she spoke with flattering earnestness and confidence, "I never was so glad in my life as I was when I found that you were my husband—my make-believe husband, I mean. After the porter came to me and let me know incidentally that I had a husband I was in an agony of fear that he might prove to be a man I

didn't know, or one I knew only slightly, and, after an interminable and soul-harrowing wait, you looked like an angel of light coming down the aisle. Then I had the courage to play my part, and—I rather liked the part. Now, are you satisfied?"

A man may not be satisfied and still be pleased. I was pleased with what she said and the way she said it, especially after her previous replies to my various suggestions. It was flattering, and there was a spirit of concession in it, even though she still failed to come to my view of the proper course of procedure. I was at once disposed to be conciliatory myself.

"We'll make the best of it," I said. "After all, there are only three or four people who know the names on the passes, and when we get to Omaha—" I paused inquiringly.

"Perhaps," she said.

"You are to visit your aunt there?" I suggested.

"Yes."

"All the disagreeable and undignified features of a train wedding would be eliminated then," I urged. "I admit that haste seems vulgar and common, but this would be very proper and correct. You will, won't you?"

"Perhaps—in a reasonable time," she conceded.

"Oh, in a reasonable time, of course," I said. "We'll be quite properly conservative—announce the engagement on our arrival and be married the next day."

"I never knew such persistent absurdity!" she exclaimed. "No self-respecting girl wants to become a wife on such short notice."

"Nonsense," I retorted. "Why, you didn't even know it when you became a wife this time."

"I'm not a wife!" she insisted hotly.

"Look at your pass—and mine," I argued. "Ask the conductor."

"For that," she said, "I shall make you wait longer. I won't marry you in Omaha at all, and I'm going to be there two months."

"A wife," I said, "is supposed to obey. If her husband orders her to

marry him, she certainly ought to do it. Think how it would look for a wife to refuse to marry her husband on demand! Why, it would create all kinds of comment."

"Well, I won't," she asserted. "I won't marry you at all if you try to be facetious over my predicament."

Before I could become properly penitent the Pullman conductor stopped at our seat.

"I am trying to get a lower berth for a woman with a baby," he explained apologetically. "I thought perhaps you and your wife would be willing to take one section and let this woman have the other lower berth."

Madge was pinching my arm.

"Certainly," I said.

"Oh, imposs—"

"My dear," I interrupted, before she could complete the word, "a woman with a baby! An upper berth for her is next to impossible, as I believe you were about to remark."

"But—"

"Let the lady have my berth," I said to the conductor.

Madge turned on me fiercely when the conductor had gone.

"How could you!" she demanded. "I shall leave the train at the next station."

"On the contrary," I returned, "I shall be accidentally left at the next station myself. I thought of that when I spoke. Can't you see that we couldn't refuse to give up one of the lower berths?"

"We couldn't, could we?" she remarked thoughtfully. "A woman with a baby! Oh, you're quite right—it was necessary."

"And we'll go back to the old plan," I said, "and I'll be left at the next station."

We talked less after this. I didn't want to leave the train and wait over, but it was really the only thing to do. Under the circumstances, we could not declare our separate identities. One cannot put aside a wife or husband so easily, no matter how easily and unexpectedly the aforesaid husband or wife

may have been acquired. My wife came with the pass, but I couldn't lose her by losing the pass—not just then—so I had to lose myself.

"It's very good of you," she remarked dismally.

"It's the only thing to do," I said. "I'll be only one train behind you at Omaha."

"I'll be at the train," she told me, to show her appreciation.

"And then to a church," I said.

"Well," she returned, "a church wedding is better than a train wedding. I've always insisted that I must have a church wedding."

"Without unnecessary delay," I added.

"In a reasonable time," she corrected.

"Same thing," I asserted, and, as she made no further correction, I felt that I had gained a point.

There was a stop of fifteen minutes at the next station, and she insisted on leaving the train with me. She would board it again in plenty of time to enable me to be left, she said, and she wanted the fresh air.

"We'll be here half an hour," said the conductor when we left. "There's a car off the track a little ahead."

So we did not confine our stroll to the station platform. It was dusk and the platform was well lighted, and too bright a light did not suit our humor. We wished to talk about passes, and the trials and tribulations resulting from deception, and—other things.

"I confess," I said, as I thought of the time spent in the smoking-room, "that it is distressing to be ignorant of the characteristics and appearance of one's wife. I had an anxious time while wondering if I could pick her out of a crowd or two."

"Think of me, waiting for an unknown husband," she returned. "It was horrible to sit there, like a piece of unclaimed baggage for which almost anyone may have the check. Oh, that seductive pass!"

"Nevertheless," I stoutly maintained, "if I find you waiting when my

train rolls into Omaha I shall feel that mine was a pass to paradise, as I have remarked before. There are churches in Omaha—hundreds of them."

Then the engine bell began to ring. I have not yet learned whether the delay was less than the conductor expected or our stroll was longer than we thought, but the train left without either of us.

For five minutes we stood looking after the train. Then we turned and looked in the direction of the lights of the town. Less than a block away a little stone church loomed up. Beside the church was the rectory. Before a rectory window a man in clerical garb

was leaning over a desk, apparently busy with a sermon.

Saying nothing I pointed out the church, the house and the man to Madge. She looked in the direction of the departing train, looked toward the church, and then took my arm with what seemed to me a sigh of contented resignation. There certainly was nothing dismal or sorrowful about it.

As we moved away in the direction of the church something else caught my eye, and I called Madge's attention to it, so that she might know that we had been passed to—well, the sign over the station read:

PARADISE JUNCTION



SUFFICIENT

I PAUSED. "You love me, then?" said she.
 "I love you now!" said I.
 "Well, if you love me now and then,
 That ought to satisfy!"

HAROLD MELBOURNE.



BOUND BY HIS PAST

"I SHOULD think," said the horse, "that you wouldn't try to kick a man unless he's doing you some harm."

"Well, when I was quite young," explained the mule, "I kicked at all men, indiscriminately, and I keep it up in order to be consistent."



COMING TO IT

HEIRESS—The count as good as proposed to me last night, but I feigned not to understand.

HER FRIEND—What did he say?

"He said there were certain restrictions on his vast inheritances which prevented his having full use of them at present."

MON COEUR

MON cœur est comme un vieux tronc d'arbre
 Où chaque passant du chemin
 Trace un nom peu digne du marbre,
 Très ignoré du parchemin.

À coups d'épingles, de canif
 Ou de griffes, mainte passante
 A dans mon cœur jusques au vif
 Marqué sa trace pantelante.

Mais chaque marque s'entr'efface,
 Et l'ecchymose, durcissant,
 Fait au vieux tronc une cuirasse
 Que ne griffe plus le passant.

Mon cœur ressemble à ce tronc d'arbre
 Que l'on voit au bord du chemin;
 L'écorce est plus dure qu'un marbre
 Et l'on n'y déchiffre plus rien.

CAMILLE ENLART.



POOR JOVE

“**J**UNO,” said Jove, “I am going out to take the air; I need exercise.”
 “Wait,” said his queen, with a strangely knowing smile, “I also need the air. I will go with you.”

“But,” objected Jove, “we should not both be gone. What if some of our children, or other Immortals, should come? One of us should be here to receive them.”

“Very true, dear,” said Juno; “you may remain at home.”
 Which Jove did.

Which explains why it thundered so furiously that night, and also why a certain favorite of the thunderer waited in the groves of Olympus so many hours in vain.



“**W**HAT a handsome man he is!”

“Yes, but when you come to talk to him you forget his face completely.”

A CRYING EVIL

By Tom Masson

THE question as to the number of children we shall have is supremely agitating at the present time.

Some ladies claim that where one is changing husbands all the time even one baby is superfluous and any more would be a public nuisance. For one thing, babies are always more or less in the way. They interfere with European travel and are hard to hold in horse-cars. They are not allowed in baggage-cars, cannot be sent by freight or express, nor checked at a hotel. They seem to be naturally wicked, are hard to raise, and seldom repay the trouble they cause.

A baby around the house often interferes with the pleasures of the nurse. He is always falling out of his carriage or interrupting her in the midst of an exciting novel. A nurse ought to have as good a time as anyone else, but the baby often keeps her from the highest enjoyment. It is hard for her to run downstairs and call up her best fellow when the baby is running loose without a collar or leader. Along with other modern conveniences, every well-regulated house ought to have a telephone switch in the nursery and save the gentle and patient nurse as many steps as possible.

Babies are generally admitted to be a poor security. Although a great deal of money is put into them, no baby would be accepted as collateral by one's butcher or broker. They draw relatives, are hard to name, and almost always develop the worst traits of our ancestors, not to mention ourselves.

The number of babies had by un-

intelligent and shortsighted parents doesn't matter in kind, but in degree. If one baby is a general nuisance, it stands to reason that two of them ought to be twice as bad. But the truth is, by the law of permutation, two are three times as bad as one, and three, six times as bad as two.

A single baby can be stowed away in an alcove or a soap-box and his cries muffled by any hard-hearted old female, but a trained nurse and a corps of faithful assistants will fail in the case of two.

That is the supreme danger of having babies, anyway. Providence has no head for figures. One of them can be decently tolerated and treated by the philosophic mind like any other bad investment. But when we are up against two or three of them, as the stork may be—when we have to elbow our way down to breakfast in the morning and there is a wintry forest of cribs in all the upper stories, almost any kind of a hereafter is a welcome change.

It is a common belief that when, in our youthful days, the sanctity of our homes is invaded by babies, it's such a real good thing, because they will support us in our old age. But by the time the returns are beginning to come in the chances are about ten to one that our candidates are going to be beaten at the polls. Most of us by that time are too old to care. What we need most of all is someone to support us while we are bringing the babies up.

It's all very well, when you are about eighty years old and full of rheumatism and reminiscences, to sit by the fireside of your wealthy son-in-law or daugh-

ter-in-law and while you are spinning some prosy old yarn to your delighted audience, to have your brow smoothed by gentle hands, and a twenty-dollar-a-month maid standing over you with her arms full of rare old Madeira and Canary in gold decanters. But that isn't what happens in real life. What happens in real life is that you are relegated to some drafty attic room for about twenty hours a day to nurse your troubles and keep them to yourself, are put on a regular allowance of about thirty cents a week, and then, when the word is passed around that "grandpa" is coming to join the family circle, there is a general stampede for the outskirts of the estate. Your baby boy of thirty years ago, the patter of whose footsteps you listened to, wondering what the shoe bill would be, and thinking of the glorious future, is now busy with troubles of his own, and has no time for "grandpa's" heart-to-heart talks.

We should be wrong to deprecate babies too strongly. There are two sides to every calamity. Occasionally we hear of a baby who has made himself useful, has successfully broken open a bank and got away with all the

money, or else been smart enough to grow up and become a magnate, robbing the general public and his country and thereby developing into a respectable member of the community.

But, speaking generally, babies are to be deplored. They always come when not wanted. They are out of place. They hinder education, interrupt the reading of the popular magazines, keep us up nights, and oftentimes humiliate us deeply, cutting us to the heart by their great numbers and frequency. They spread undelightful diseases, promote germs and are constantly adding to the number of undesirable folks.

If there could be a regular baby industry, in which only the first-class article were permitted to exist, much mitigation of the present unhappy state of affairs might result. As it is, there are too many seconds. Damaged goods are thrown on the market, with no thought of the result, except to get rid of them.

Every baby ought to have the maker's guarantee, and when he doesn't come up to the mark he ought to be returned C. O. D. At present, however, there seems nothing to do but to mourn our gain.



HE WAS IT

YOUNG MAN—Miss Smith?

NEW MAID—She's engaged.

"I know it. I'm what she's engaged to."



ITS EFFECT ON HIM

LITTLE REMINGTON (*A Kentucky lad*)—Papa, what is a Prohibitionist?
COLONEL CORKRIGHT—A Prohibitionist, my son, is a puhsion who drinks watuh and talks like a fool.